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LIBERTY UNION AND DEMOCRACY

BOOKS BY BARRETT WENDELL

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The National Ideals of America

BY

BARRETT WENDELL

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NOTE

THESE lectures had their origin in that portion of my course at the Sorbonne which was least concerned with matters touched on in my "Literary History of America." In their present form they were given before the Lowell Institute, in Boston, during the autumn of 1905.

B. W.

CONTENTS

I

Page

The National Character of America 1

II

Liberty 89

III

Union 174

IV

Democracy 249

I

THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF AMERICA

It may seem presumptuous that a man who is known, where known at all, as a rhetorician or as a literary critic should venture to call attention to a subject neither literary nor rhetorical, but rather — so far as it can be classified — half historical and half philosophical. To explain this, I feel bound to state the circumstances under which I came seriously to concern myself with matters so ambitious. Not very long ago I was suddenly and unexpectedly called upon to perform an unprecedented duty. This was to deliver before certain universities of France a series of lectures, the object

of which should be to explain to a French public the peculiar characteristics of our own country, America. The precise topics on which I was to speak were left to my free choice. Evidently, if the lectures were to be efficient, that choice must direct itself to topics which Americans have believed vital.

Thus I was brought to consider, among other matters, the manner in which America has conceived and has responded to the political ideals most conscious and most potent during the one hundred and thirty years of our national history. A subtle matter this, for it is not a question of just what we have been, nor yet of just what we have done. It is a question rather of what, in our more earnest moments, we have honestly imagined ourselves to be, or perhaps better still, of what we have believed that we should strive for. Yet subtle

though the matter be, none, I think is more deeply instructive.

At least, the lectures in which I touched on this aspect of America proved to be among those which were most helpful to my French hearers, who desired to understand what manner of men we Americans are. And it has seemed to me that perhaps some of my countrymen, too, might be glad to consider, in this broadly general way, those national ideals which we have come to feel most indisputably our own, most surely and ineradicably native.

Simple as that phrase seems, the very word "native" involves an assumption so general nowadays that we are apt to forget its significance. It assumes that we of America, we of the United States, have a distinct and individual national character; a national character in the same sense in which the English

have one, and the French and Germans and the rest, — a national character which distinguishes us, by the very fact of our American temperament, from all other people who have passed or who are passing under the sun. Though a national character, in this sense, be a vague and elusive fact, it is apt finally to seem a far more certain one than any material trait of the nation to which it gives spiritual life. It is like the personal character of a human being, distinct from his words, distinct from his deeds, yet animating both, and vital in memory among those who have known him, long after his words and his deeds are contentedly forgotten. And that modern America has such a national character there can be little doubt. To some degree, this was recognized long ago; it has been widely recognized, and indeed recognized with some perturba-

tion by other people than ourselves, since the war of 1898 made us, whether we would or no, an imperial factor in the policy of the world.

Among native Americans this character has long been increasingly conscious. For a period far longer than any in which the memory of man runneth to the contrary, Americans have felt themselves to be something different from Europeans. They have often found the difference hard to define. Very often in trying to define it they have fallen into the juvenile blunders of national brag; but these blunders only obscure the spiritual reality which lies beneath them; they do not disprove it — indeed, they rather indicate its persistent strength. Americans are different from any other human beings now gladdening the earth. They are sure that they are so; and other people

are more and more apt to confirm their assurance. For all alike may find the assurance warranted by the vitally national character which animates true Americans from the cradle to the grave.

The precise thing I mean reveals itself nowhere more clearly than in the extraordinary power which our country has possessed, and which, happily enough, it still possesses, of absorbing into its very inmost heart incessant and what might well seem overwhelming floods of incompatible immigration. Throughout the nineteenth century, the jaws of our ports have swallowed up countless hordes of human beings, strange in their origin to the traditions and the institutions of the country where they and their descendants now loom so large in any statistical record of the American people. There is no commonplace more generally believed abroad,

accordingly, nor any more often repeated by thoughtless folk among ourselves, than that which asserts our modern America to be confused and composite. Our national character as it exists to-day, we are told again and again, is neither more nor less than an incomplete fusion of those diverse and alien ones which are mingling themselves all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Yet any one who familiarly knows the younger Americans of these very times of ours must feel this commonplace to be far from comprehensive — how far may perhaps be more evident to a man in my professional position as a college teacher than to most others. Year by year, as new classes come to me and new class lists are laid before my eyes, I am confronted with faces, and still more with names, absolutely foreign in all their implications, to the traditions

by which we of New England have been nurtured, and which in turn we have jealously cherished these three hundred years. In the sentiment which this fact excites there is nothing alertly invidious: if there were, the sentiment would not be characteristic of our generous country. Yet I should not be human if I could feel it free from all tinge of sadness. We of the elder race love to call ourselves Yankees; and, however heartily we may delight in the traits which make other men Irishmen or Germans or Italians or whatever else, we cannot help perceiving that those traits are not in all respects the same as our own. And so, when more and more names and faces gathering about us in our own New England remind us that the regions where our fathers dwelt shall in time to come be the homes of children whose fathers were other than

ours, there must hover into our consciousness some despairing sense that we of the elder tradition are a race peacefully conquered, — overwhelmed as surely as if the invasion had been emphasized by all the circumstance of war.

With each new year, accordingly, a native American college teacher, face to face with strange new names and with features which cannot but seem alien, must surely find himself afraid that for better or worse the future of our country must be something different from the past we have loved so well. A few weeks pass. He comes to know the youths whose names at first sounded so strange, whose faces at first looked so disquietingly different from those familiar to "that old New England, still pure of foreign taint," where our ancestral worthies stand heroic in their dreamy past. And as these youths

cease to be strangers, their teacher begins wonderingly to understand that at heart they are in no wise foreigners. Their names sound uncouth to his Yankee ears, the lines of their features still make him rub his Yankee eyes; but more impressive than all this unfamiliarity is his growing certitude that despite the variety of their origin these boys themselves are not diverse, after all, nor yet strangers to the world where they have come to dwell. Primarily, fundamentally, they are not Frenchmen or Italians, Irishmen or Germans or Jews. They are rather Yankees like their native Yankee teacher. Unwittingly, almost unobserved, they have become Americans; they no longer cherish the traditions ancestral to the countries from whence their parents have emerged; they embody rather the animating force which has been vitally ancestral to this

America of our own. The power of assimilation inherent from the beginning in the national character of America proves still unbroken. So long as it stays so, we who love our country may be careless of mere physical fact. It is not the mortal body of our race, it is the deathless spirit for which we passionately desire a noble endurance.

The most reassuring phase of this impression which, as a college teacher, I have received so often — and which, for that matter, I have so often received as a traveller in various parts of the United States — is the certainty with which it proves mistaken the common assumption that the national character of our modern America is composite. If at heart the Americans of to-day were really the fusing amalgamation of various foreign influences — Irish, German, Italian, Jewish, whatever else — they might

be, and perhaps they would be, a noteworthy and admirable species of the human race; but they would not be what we mean by the term "Americans." They would not have their place in the spiritual succession of the people who founded and developed our imperial republic. They would not be, for example, the fellow-countrymen of Lincoln, of Webster, of Washington, of Franklin. And the fellow-countrymen of these worthies, and of all the worthies who belong to our American tradition as distinguished from that of other countries than ours, the true Americans of this very moment, whatever their origin, still surely remain.

This fact is generally recognized. However people may talk of our composite nationality, you shall search our patriotic eloquence in vain for trace of even implied denial that the people

which asserted its independence of England in 1775 was ancestral to us of America to-day; our Revolutionary forefathers, the orators are all agreed, were Americans in precisely the same sense of that word which still makes us feel it instinctively inspiring. Almost all those who have discussed our history, on the other hand, — and not least our own masters of public speech, — have had an artless habit of assuming that our national character began its glorious existence at the moment when it became conscious — the moment of the American Revolution. The wholesomely loyal teaching of our public schools, too, has been apt to grow legendary, pretending that our nationality sprang into full life, from nowhere, at the moment when we heroically declared ourselves independent of ancestral England and set up political institutions of our own.

Even amid our most fervent legend, to be sure, there may be room for friendly dispute as to whether our nationality was startled into being by the guns of Lexington or was more regularly ushered into the world by the reverend signatures appended to the Declaration of Independence. There is a general agreement, however, that this nationality, unbroken now for these one hundred and thirty years, was the instant result of the political institutions peculiar to our free and independent country.

If it were it would be a miracle; and, after all, modern prejudice is apt to suppose that the age of miracles is past. Instead of concerning ourselves with miraculous legend, accordingly, we shall do better to inquire what this nationality of ours seems to be as a matter of fact. Concrete examples will help us. A little while ago we touched on three or four

eminent men who, whatever else they may have been, were Americans as distinguished from any other kind of human beings. The most recent of these was Abraham Lincoln, the man whom common consent is beginning to recognize as our chief national hero of the nineteenth century. This is not the moment to analyze his deeply interesting character. Only one fact about him demands our attention now. Great though he were on any human scale, he was not the only great man of that nineteenth century which his life enriched. Compare him, hastily or carefully as you will, with those of his great European contemporaries whose names happen first to occur to you, — Gladstone, Bismarck, Cavour, or whomever you choose among the French, — and you will instantly feel that Lincoln possessed some peculiar quality which makes him

our compatriot and not theirs. He was at one with us in just the sort of fundamental nature in which one and all of them were not; he was different from each of them, as they were from us or from one another. We need not now analyze, it is enough that we recognize the quality which marked him, in common with us, as American. It was not physical, it was spiritual; and that spiritual fact, thus perceived though undefined, is the fact which underlies that elusive, certain thing of which we are in search, — the nationality, the native character of America.

Now Lincoln was born in 1809, less than a month before the inauguration of President Madison. His case, accordingly, may seem to support the opinion that his peculiarly American character was the result of political institutions already in rooted existence when he

first saw the light. If so, one fact seems certain. A character so incontestably American as his should be discernible only among men who had the good fortune to be born under the benign influence of the Constitution of the United States. Yet the very mention of that state paper can hardly help calling to mind another compatriot, whose name we recalled a little while ago, at the very moment when the name of Lincoln first occurred to us. I mean Daniel Webster. Different though he was from Lincoln, different like Lincoln from you and me or from any other human being than himself, there was in Webster a quality which marks him as something different from the great men of other countries than our own, exactly as we have felt Lincoln himself to be. Without attempting to analyze this difference any more than in the case

of Lincoln, we can surely agree that this impalpable certainty is what made both Webster and Lincoln Americans, in just the sense of that term which we have been trying somewhat indefinitely to define. Yet Webster was twenty-seven years old when Lincoln came into being; and this means that Webster was older than that legendarily miraculous Constitution of the United States, the document of which he became the most passionately prophetic interpreter. Obviously this Constitution cannot have been the cause of Webster's American nationality. In the spirit, as in the flesh, no man can spring from ancestors younger than himself. But the Constitution is not our only body of nationally holy writ. There can be no question that six years before Webster was born the Declaration of Independence had uttered those words which almost mag-

ically created our national consciousness. There is a case left for those who should assert that the Declaration thus created our national character, and in so doing performed a miracle unique since the first chapter of Genesis.

It behooves us, accordingly, to inquire whether Americans existed before the Declaration of Independence. When we first touched on the names of Lincoln and of Webster, we may remember, we touched as hastily on a greater name still, the name of our supreme national hero, Washington. In one sense, Washington and Webster were contemporary; the New Hampshire boy was seventeen years old when the great Virginian gentleman died. In another sense, they belonged to different generations; Washington was fifty years older than Webster. And this means that in 1776, when the Declara-

tion of Independence was signed, Washington was well past the age of forty. Throughout his career, the while, Washington, for all his greatness, seems just as distinctly American as Webster does, or as Lincoln. Though so long a British subject, he was never a typical Englishman; though so cordial an ally of France, he was never anything like a Frenchman; the better you know the record of his life, the more surely you feel him, in exactly the sense which we have been trying to understand, an American — a fellow-countryman of our own. No generalization of our national character could begin to be true if it should fail to include him. Yet there can be no manner of question that Washington came to his full maturity a good many years before the recognized establishment of those institutions to which patriotic legend is now so fondly apt to attribute the mi-

raculous origin of our national character. This national character, in short, had found what we still conceive to be its most admirable embodiment at a period when the Declaration of Independence had not even begun to loom in sight.

Again, to go a little further still, it was by no mere chance that President Sparks, who founded the solid and scientific study of American history, devoted the greater part of his editorial work to setting forth the writings of Washington and of Franklin. Even when they were still alive, Americans were already apt to think of those two great contemporaries together, and apart from the rest. In the historical perspective of our revolutionary history, they still tower side by side, much as Shakespeare and Milton rise above the other poets who are gathered in the perspective of the greatest century of Eng-

lish literature. And Franklin, whose shrewd knowledge of men and of affairs made him so eminent and so efficient both in England and in France, was perhaps chiefly eminent and efficient in those countries because to both he seemed remarkably different from the kind of men to whom they were accustomed. Whatever else he may have been, this Franklin was American, in the sense in which Washington was American, and Webster, and Lincoln. And Franklin was born in the reign of Queen Anne, three years before the first number of the "Tatler" had set the fashion for a coming century of polite letters. Very clearly his Americanism could not have resulted from wars and documents undreamt of until he had nearly rounded out the span of life conventionally allotted to mankind.

What is more, Franklin was by no

means the earliest of Americans. One of his familiar letters will recall another of our national worthies. When Franklin was well past the age of seventy, he wrote from Passy to the Reverend Samuel Mather of Boston a letter which pleasantly records his personal memories of Mather's father, — that locally celebrated divine and historian Cotton Mather, whose personal peculiarities were so marked that to this day his character remains a matter of not quite dispassionate dispute. In one sense, no doubt, this Cotton Mather was not precisely what we now call an American; he was a loyal British subject. But, at the same time, he was a New England Yankee, who, in the course of sixty-five laborious and extraordinarily active years, never drifted a day's journey away from the Second Church of Boston, of which he so

long occupied the pulpit. And throughout his life, we must remember, there was not only no such thing as American independence; there was hardly such a thing at all as we now mean by America; there was only a narrow fringe of colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, each holding its own strand of communication with the mother-country. So, though Mather could not have been comprehensively American, in such sense as his later and greater countrymen were at whom we have glanced, he was, in common with them, something quite different from a European. You cannot know the story of his life, without feeling it, in spirit as well as in circumstance, inseparable from that pristine New England to which, in his own quaint way, he consecrated every energy of his untiringly busy existence. He was pragmatic, bigoted,

fantastic, even abortive, if you will; yet you must surely admit that he was the countryman of Franklin, of Washington, of Webster, of Lincoln, of ourselves. And he was born in Boston just after the accession of King Charles the Second. When Franklin knew him, he was sixty years old, and Franklin was only a youth. The type of character which we call American proves less and less recent.

We can trace it further still. Indeed, whoever knows the story of Cotton Mather can hardly help doing so. Among his varied characteristics, none was more deeply admirable than his life-long devotion to his father, Increase Mather, a far less peculiar and far more powerful man than he. There is something about Increase Mather, indeed, which — despite their obvious differences of prejudice and cir-

cumstance — makes him seem singularly like Franklin. It was Increase Mather, for one thing, who achieved in England perhaps the first great triumph of American diplomacy; he secured from a government by no means disposed to grant him peculiar favors that provincial charter of Massachusetts which in its day was the most free and the most efficient in the whole English-speaking world. And Increase Mather was born, at our own Dorchester of Massachusetts, in 1639, three years before the Civil Wars of England began to shake the throne of King Charles the First. And when you grow to know him, he seems just as American as ever his son did, or Franklin.

The name of Increase Mather's son and colleague in the Second Church records the fact that Increase Mather's

wife was a daughter of John Cotton, long minister of the First Church of Boston. And by this time we have been straying so long from concrete fact that instead of generalizing about John Cotton, we may find it refreshing to define our idea of his character by glancing at some words which he wrote back to England after he had firmly settled himself among the founders of Massachusetts. Certain Puritan noblemen had addressed to the colonial magistrates a formal set of questions, inquiring, among other things, whether, in case they should emigrate to New England with their families, their descendants could be assured of the sort of distinction which persons of quality would enjoy in the mother-country. The official reply to this question seems assuredly to have been written by Cotton; and here are his words, as preserved in the Appendix

to Hutchinson's "History of Massachusetts":

"Thus standeth our case: Though we receive [gentlemen] with honour, and allow them pre-eminence and accommodation according to their condition, yet we do not ordinarily call them forth to the power of election, or administration of magistracy, until they be received as members into some of our churches, a privilege which we doubt not religious gentlemen will willingly desire (as David did in Psal. xxvii. 4) and christian churches will as readily impart to such desirable persons. Hereditary honours both nature and scripture doth acknowledge (Eccles. x. 17) but hereditary authority standeth only by the civil laws of some commonwealths; and yet, even amongst them, the authority and power of the father is nowhere communicated, together

with his honours, unto all his posterity. Where God blesseth any branch of any noble or generous family with a spirit and gifts fit for government, it would be a taking of God's name in vain to put such a talent under a bushel, and a sin against the honour of magistracy to neglect such in our public elections. But if God should not delight to furnish some of their posterity with gifts fit for magistracy, we should expose them rather to reproach and prejudice, and the commonwealth with them, than exalt them to honour, if we should call them forth, when God doth not, to public authority."

For all the quaint formality of Cotton's phrasing, for all the deference to rank inseparable from the politeness of the seventeenth century, no one can help feeling the spirit of those closing sentences to be as characteristically

American as that of the "Biglow Papers." And John Cotton who wrote them, and who by writing them showed himself to be what we mean when we call a man American to-day, was not only dead and gone generations before anybody began to dream of the Declaration of Independence or of the Constitution of the United States; more remarkably still, he was a thorough Englishman. He was born, in the heart of the mother-country, thirty-five years before the Mayflower anchored in the trackless waters which we now reverence as Plymouth Harbor. He had grown to his maturity under Queen Elizabeth; and for years he had been a clergyman of the Church of England, and vicar of the tall church of St. Botolph in Lincolnshire Boston. American though his words may seem, he was indisputably a man who had spent

the best years of his life, not in our America, which during those years had not yet been founded, but in the England of Queen Elizabeth, of King James, and of King Charles.

The series of our American worthies at whom we have now hastily glanced is not exceptional. It is so far from unusual, indeed, that we may well accept it rather as typical. Any other such series, stretching back from the days of Abraham Lincoln to those when New England or Virginia were first colonized, would tell the same story. In any such series you would find the type of character which we recognize as nationally American clearly evident from the very beginning. We have not tried to define this type of character in any set form of words, and we need trouble ourselves with no such attempt. Whoever knows modern America must surely be aware

of its temper, much as he might be in the case of some friend, so familiar that any attempt to analyze or to describe his character might rather tend to obscure it. And as again and again we find that we can trace the qualities which have proved typically American to the very founders of our country, we cannot avoid a conclusion completely at odds with the common assumption that the institutions of our present republic are what have made Americans American. Our national character, we must freely admit, existed a century and a half before these institutions, under which we now live, came into existence. That the character and the institutions are closely interrelated, no one would pretend to deny. But it is not the character which results from the institutions; it is the institutions which result from the character implanted on

the Virginian seaboard, and on that of New England, during the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

In seeking the origin of our national character, accordingly, we must ask ourselves who those pristine exponents of it were, from whom we can thus trace our spiritual descent. John Cotton may serve us as a type of the American forefathers. That letter of his at which we have lately glanced seems most thoroughly characteristic of American temper; and yet, as we have already reminded ourselves, the man who wrote it was not born an American; at the time of his birth, indeed, there was no America to be born in. He was an Englishman. Still he was not exactly what we mean when we call men Englishmen nowadays. He was an Englishman of another and an earlier sort than our English contemporaries. Without

troubling ourselves with idle dispute as to better or worse, we cannot avoid the conclusion that modern Englishmen are distinctly different in character from the Englishmen who came to their maturity between 1600 and 1625.

If your mind works as mine does, the mere mention of those dates, separated by a conventional quarter of a conventional century, suggests the lazily curious question of what happened in the quarter of a century which ensued. During the first quarter of the seventeenth century, anybody will remember, Queen Elizabeth died and the reign of King James the First ran its course. In 1625, it happens, King Charles the First succeeded to the throne. Twenty-five years later, in 1650, King Charles was dead. Everybody knows what had intervened. Between 1625 and 1650 England had

undergone what still seems the most tragic experience in her whole modern history, — an experience of armed political revolution. Keeping this familiar fact in mind, we cannot help instantly perceiving another, which concerns our American forefathers in their relation to English history. This second fact, indeed, is so obvious that to mention it might seem needless if it had not so often been neglected. Those founders of our country, coming to their maturity in the twenty-five years of English history which preceded the approaching years of revolution, could not help being pre-revolutionary Englishmen. Their whole maturing experience was inevitably gained in an England where every historic force was tending towards a passionate internal conflict, of which the issue could be settled by no less terrible test than that of mortal civil war. From

that civil war and from the twelve years of political experiment which followed upon the execution of King Charles, England emerged changed. The experience of revolution had done its work in moulding new features for the English national character. From the restoration of King Charles the Second until the reign of his present Majesty, the type of character which we recognize as most truly typical of England has been more or less like that which we symbolize to-day under the conventional guise of John Bull. And John Bull is a very different kind of being from the children and the grandchildren of Elizabethan Englishmen who came to honest blows under King Charles the First.

The forefathers of America — John Cotton and all the rest — were Englishmen of that elder type. The England which they knew was not yet quite

ripe for the great revolution of the seventeenth century; but their whole knowledge and experience of ancestral England accrued during the years which just preceded that great explosion of conflicting historical forces. In the temperament of people who live at such moments as this, let the moments be anywhere throughout history, there are bound to develop certain marked peculiarities. When a revolution is at hand, whether your sympathy be with the past or with the future, you cannot help feeling, if there be any human feeling in you, that the present state of affairs cannot persist, and should not be suffered to. The world is out of joint; it must be set right; and the only vital question becomes, Who shall best set it right, and how? That the actual state of things must presently be replaced by another and a better, every man who deserves

the name of man is agreed. Now this other state and better — this Golden Age, whether a lost one or one not yet attained by human error — is inevitably something not in actual existence. It is an ideal, but at the same time it is an ideal which for the moment presents itself not as fantastic, but as attainable. The people of any pre-revolutionary epoch, — blindly reactionary, fervently radical, or whatever else, — cannot help being visionary; or, to put the case at its gentlest, they are bound, beyond people of other epochs, to be idealistic. In some change of system near at hand, in some re-adjustment of human institutions, they foresee a new dispensation of divine order. A pre-revolutionary epoch must be an epoch of noble dreams.

Dreams, however noble, would not be dreams if they did not sadly prove to be

things which the complications of any historically continuous society must prevent from coming wholly true on earth. The awakening from such dreams in European experience is among the saddest facts which recurrently pervade European history. Just that kind of sad experience was one of the few trials which our American forefathers were in great measure spared ; for they were pre-revolutionary Englishmen who founded our own country in pre-revolutionary times. And even to this day, throughout the course of our American history, the country which they founded has not yet known the sorrow of such destructive revolution as perhaps, in time to come, may prove its own ancestral ideals as evanescent as those dreams which faded from England while Cromwell still strove to make them real.

A familiar fact in American history

will perhaps throw light on what I mean. It has often seemed puzzling that when our Revolution broke out, — awakening America to a national consciousness destined to be permanently independent of any other, — the instinctive sympathy of Americans seemed, as indeed it has remained, more strongly attracted to a traditionally foreign European nation, the French, than to the people of our mother-country, the English, who are unquestionably our nearest kin, and furthermore are bound to us by the inseparable tie of a common language. Now, if you will reflect for a moment on the history of France during the years which immediately followed those when our national friendship for France began, you can hardly help seeing that throughout those years the course of French history was extraordinarily like that of English history

during the generation which followed the planting of Virginia and of New England. In each case a revolution was close at hand, so passionate that it was to bring a reigning sovereign to the scaffold. A tragic crisis like that can come only after the temper of a nation has reached a state of emotional fervor which stirs all human nature to its most sluggish depths. The enduring character of America, we have seen, has sprung from that of Englishmen who came to their maturity in the generation before that which fought the civil wars of the seventeenth century, and who planted their seed in regions where there was little to disturb its growth. It is hardly fantastic, accordingly, to discern in the alert, instinctive sympathy of eighteenth-century Americans with the pre-revolutionary French an evidence that in essence our own na-

tional temper is pre-revolutionary. In 1775 France was in a state widely and variously analogous to that of England in 1625; and at heart the people of America had remained very like Englishmen of that earlier time, which means that they had unwittingly become unlike the Englishmen who were then their contemporaries. The English of 1775 had grown stolid; Americans were pre-revolutionary still, and France was on the verge of revolution. Analogy of temper prevailed over community of blood and of traditional law; for with us of America the things of the spirit are still apt to seem more vividly true, and to be more potent, than the things of the flesh. Like the pre-revolutionary folks of other regions we remain, as we have been from the beginning, instinctively and passionately devoted to those vague, intangible reali-

ties for which one can find no more definite name than Ideals.

The national character of America, I feel sure, may best be understood when we thus consider it as derived from that of the pre-revolutionary England idealists, who founded our ancestral colonies in the early seventeenth century. Among our forefathers there was one group which has happened to leave extremely copious records. We of New England are often accused of a complacent self-satisfaction hardly justified by our increasing provincialism. To contradict an impression so unhappily general would be presumptuous; a better course is humbly to account for the unwinsome symptoms in question. And a little reflection will find ancestral cause for them. During the first century or so of American life the better sort of people in New Eng-

land suffered from a disorder in which Yankee posterity has been disposed to discern ineffable virtues, and other than Yankee posterity has been able to perceive only the contagious virtue of irritating disease. Virtue or disease, it was a fact. The fathers of New England were intellectually active to a degree which did not disturb the repose of their contemporaries to the southward. They wrote and they published copiously at the very time when a Virginian magistrate is said to have thanked God that there was only one printing-press within the limits of his colony, and to have prayed God that there might not be another for a hundred years to come. Very possibly, this magistrate was soundly wise in his day and generation; but without entering into dispute concerning his wisdom, we may all agree, I think, that this wisdom,

however pregnant, had not the quality which we have come to recognize as Yankee. There can be no doubt, either, that in their essential temper, the copious expressions of early New England still seem very Yankee indeed. It may have been diseased copiousness of expression which made the records of New England so bulky. Their bulk, if nothing else, could not fail to attract attention. They have become more widely known than other records of pristine America. Therefore, perhaps, they have been rather more direct in their influence on later American temper. To put the case most mildly, they have made the ancestral history of New England less legendary than that of other American origins. When concerned, accordingly, as we are concerned now, with the intellectual and spiritual character of our country, as

distinguished from its material and political progress, it is hard to feel that we of New England are wholly wrong in attending with particular attention to the early records of our own increasingly isolated corner of the continent.

Those early publications of New England are dull reading nowadays. In their own time they were not found so. And by trying to imagine how anybody could ever have welcomed them we can begin to understand our ancestral character more clearly. The fathers of New England, as their records imply, were not only pre-revolutionary English idealists, they were pre-revolutionary English idealists of a very precise kind. Just here that word "precise," which occurred to me accidentally, has a happy precision of its own. The peculiarities of pristine Yankee idealism were not only precise

in the sense that they can help us to define the species of idealism which has animated later America; they were precise, as well, in a manner which made unsympathetic contemporaries describe our forefathers somewhat contumeliously as "precisians"; for these devout emigrants were pragmatically devoted to a peculiar and extremely precise religious philosophy.

This fact is nowhere more compactly stated than in a letter to "Sir John Worssenham," written from Leyden by John Robinson and William Brewster, on the twenty-seventh of January, 1617: "Touching the Ecclesiasticall ministrie, . . . we agree in all things with the French reformed churches, according to their publick confession of faith; though some small differences be to be found in our practises, not at all in the substance of the

things, but only in some accidentall circumstances.

"1. As first their ministers doe pray with their heads covered; ours uncovered.

"2. We chose none for Governing Elders but such as are able to teach; which abilitie they doe not require;" and so on.

This casual passage from a document preserved in Bradford's "History" defines, with characteristic precision, two or three facts. It brings into clear light the manner in which our New England forefathers attached importance to what might now seem insignificant details. It implies their hard good sense. And it shows how unreservedly they declared themselves to be precisians of that peculiar sort commonly called Puritan. In other words, as that very letter precisely states, they

were devout believers in the system of theology most authoritatively set forth by the great French reformer, John Calvin.

Beyond question the typical Americans of to-day are no longer devoted to the precise tenets of Calvinism. The most typical worthies of nineteenth century New England, indeed, were something worse than rebels to that inflexible doctrine. They devoted the better part of their intellectual and philosophical energy to vigorously denouncing the errors of Calvinistic theology. If they had not amiably refused to believe in damnation, they would not have hesitated to declare that theology as damnable as ever Calvinist found unregenerate human nature. "Whoever will consult the famous Assembly's 'Catechisms and Confession,'" wrote Channing, so early as 1809, "will see the

peculiarities of the system in all their length and breadth of deformity. A man of plain sense, whose spirit has not been broken to this creed by education or terror, will think that it is not necessary for us to travel to heathen countries to learn how mournfully the human mind may misrepresent the Deity." Such was the beginning of devout free thought in eastern New England. And, as some reactionary backslider has said, the spiritual history of this region from Channing's time to ours may be summarized as that of a theological progress from certainty concerning what the devil is, to uncertainty concerning what the devil anything is. But granting all this, we cannot deny that, even where its fires seem to have smouldered into the most lifeless ashes, the faith of our ancestral Calvinists has left deep traces.

Those very men of New England,

indeed, who have been most eager to repudiate the grim letter of that creed still bear the birthmark it seared on the foreheads of their fathers. At least so much of the present national character of our country as is derived from New England, or from any other region where Calvinism was ever dominant, has characteristics which no one can understand but those who will force themselves into some manner of sympathy with that peculiar phase of pre-revolutionary English idealism which was crystallized in Calvinistic confessions of faith.

The bewilderingly intricate details of Calvinistic theology are far beyond our present scope. One or two general aspects of it, nevertheless, not only deserve but demand our thoughtful attention. Among its most fundamental contentions was the assertion that, as a punishment for the ancestral sin of

Adam, the human will, in all his innumerable children, had been condemned to fundamental discord with the will of God: "Our first parents, . . . being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of Satan, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and break the covenant in eating the forbidden fruit. By this sin, they, and we in them, fell from original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. . . . Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good." This sin of rebellious will, a sin hereditarily inevitable for every human being in whose veins the blood of Adam is flowing, was held to merit literal damnation. There was but one chance of escape from this damnable sin and its just penalty. This

chance was that the grace of God, miraculously vouchsafed to certain human beings through the mediation of Christ, would relieve these elect from the general doom of humanity: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased in His accepted and appointed time effectually to call by His word and spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, . . . renewing their wills, and by His Almighty power determining them to that which is good."

We might go on indefinitely with such inexorable passages from the Confessions which our New England forefathers accepted as unerringly true. They would lead us more and more cer-

tainly to a conclusion which we may better state in simpler terms of our own. Whether any given human being could thus be miraculously saved no one but himself, in the inmost secret of his heart, could ever truly know. Furthermore, the only means by which, even in the inmost of those inmost secrets, he could ever truly know it for himself was by the discovery that for some fleeting, baffling instants his human will, despite its hereditary corruption, could sometimes bring itself, through divine mercy, into momentary semblance of renewed harmony with the will of Almighty God. Now the will of God which passeth all understanding seems at least to have two qualities which we can define in human words.

In the first place it is beyond dispute; it rises above all the perversities and errors of this human world; it

exists eternally, immutably, in all the infinite splendor of absolute truth. In the second place, to no small degree because of its absolute truth, it has an aspect in comparison with which the passing things of this shadowy world, however solid their outward semblance, grow to seem fantastically unreal. No observation of the eye or of the mind, to be sure, could ever have so perceived the will of God as to record it in terms of what human presumption boasts to be exact science. No experiment could ever have tested its range, its quality, its components, its nature. It is among those things, perhaps we may better say it comprises all those things, beyond human ken, to which the cant of passing philosophy has lately given the convenient name of "unknowable." For human beings, accordingly, it is inevitably a matter not of

what they call knowledge, but of what they call belief. In other words, of all human conceptions it is the least material — the most essentially and irrevocably ideal. And yet, all the while, for those who earnestly believe and seek it, this same Divine Will must forever have a quality of certainty unapproached by the puny certainties of material and mortal things. To such as these it can never seem a fancy or a dream. Rather it comes to have a reality beyond all reality else, in the very elusiveness and infinity of its ideal and immortal persistence.

Now there can be no doubt that, among those of our New England forefathers whose aspirations toward righteousness have bred the nobler phases of our national character, the deepest spiritual efforts of generations were devoted to incessant searching of the inmost

secrets of their hearts. The single aspiration of their higher lives was to discern within themselves that momentarily ideal fact, the errant human will, grown miraculously harmonious with that infinitely ideal fact, the absolutely true and infinite will of God. Thus, and only thus, they could enjoy "an infallible assurance of faith, founded on the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, revealed in the Gospel." And this assurance, for those who fervently believed, was beyond all else desirable. It was the only true and lasting comfort which could console a generation convinced that without it nothing less than eternal perdition could await human beings.

The days of such soul-searching are generally past, — so long past, indeed, that at least in our older New England regions the terms of Puritan writings

sound as strange as those of other, and alien or barbarous, creeds which should share with that of the Puritans only the error of "mournfully misrepresenting the Deity." But though the letter of Puritanism be no longer vital among the children of the New England fathers, the spirit of it is mighty still and walks abroad. You shall search far for a true descendant of their fervid race who can resist the inclination inbred in his spirit to believe that truth is absolute and that his deepest duty is to perceive this absolute truth, so far as he can. Ideal though such perception must be, irreducible to any terms which science can define or observe, it is not unreal or fantastic. Rather, when once it irradiates his intelligence, it blazes, with a glory of its own, as the deepest, surest, noblest reality of all, — a reality in the presence of which the little things of

this passing world may be neglected and even mismanaged with serenity. In conduct, like all intense idealists, the Calvinistic fathers and their errant children have evinced more than occasional imperfection. At heart, their intense and persistent idealism has permeated and consecrated their spiritual lives even to this day. And thus we may begin to feel the elusive, true spiritual fact of which we are together in search. However the dogmas of Calvinism may now be questioned or denied in America, there can be no denial that the passionately precise idealism of the Calvinists enforced, strengthened, and defined among our American forefathers the more general idealism which pervaded all pre-revolutionary Englishmen. Sprung from such origins, the national character of America could not bear the lineaments of its race, if it

were not still, in its deeper impulses, almost mystically ideal.

Nor is this the whole story. Another phase of Calvinistic doctrine — a phase still more relentlessly rejected by what deems itself enlightened posterity — has left on our national character a trace perhaps the more profound because it is distinctly less obvious. "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory," according to the Confession of Faith in Cotton Mather's "Magnalia," from which we have already taken so many uncompromising assertions, "some men are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained unto everlasting death." The general opinion of Calvinistic divinity held that those predestinated unto everlasting life were comparatively few; that many are called, but few are chosen. The few chosen were the elect, — the

elect whose wills had been miraculously brought into renewed harmony with the infinite will of Divinity. Who these might be no human foresight could tell or guess; but when anybody on earth was thus gloriously liberated from the ancestral curse of humanity, his words and his actions were apt to distinguish him from among the mass of his fellow-men. There were no sure signs, doubtless, by which the chosen of God could be indisputably distinguished this side of the Heaven where they were ultimately to "receive . . . fulness of joy and glory with everlasting reward in the presence of the Lord"; but there were signs in plenty by which you might probably discern the presence on earth of those whom "God hath . . . effectually called and sanctified by His spirit." And the saving grace of God might alight on any human being; and any

human being on whom this grace had alighted became thereby and forever nobler and better than other men, — those lost myriads of humanity from whose doom he had been snatched. Here below, as throughout eternity, he was no longer the equal, he was the reverend superior of such fellow-creatures as were left to God's justice, unrelieved by that unmerited mercy which should divinely spare His elect from the penalty of ancestral and personal sin. In other words, the Calvinists believed, you might always be assured, that in every human region there are a few men who are essentially better than the mass of their fellows; and such superiority as this is not a matter of accident, of delusion, or of contradiction to the essential will of our common Father in Heaven. On the contrary, it is the most venerable earthly manifestation of His grace.

The system of Calvinism, in short, was not only supremely ideal, it was supremely orderly; and orderly with such hierarchical precision as should hold in deepest horror the vagaries of anarchy. The order in which God might be pleased to range human beings, to be sure, — the order in which He might choose from among mankind those few of their fellows who should eternally be better than the rest, — was by no means the conventional hereditary order of this world. Yet it had a close analogy to that transitory human order which keeps society together. In both the human order and the divine, most of us are bound to have our betters. And among the deepest phases of Puritan conviction was the certain assurance that when by any process of seeking we can discover here on earth one who is truly and justly among

these betters, it is our constant duty not to belittle him with all the spite of envy, hatred, and malice, but rather reverently to thank God that here is something nobler than such as we.

Literal faith in the doctrine of election has long languished in America. Yet the traces of that doctrine, once so profoundly cherished by our fathers, are not far to seek in the national character of our country. Among the commonplaces of our century and more of republican eloquence you will find innumerable thoughtless assertions of human equality which, if duly reasoned out by any process of ordinary logic, would start us headlong toward anarchy. Whoever knows America the while must surely recognize that, in true impulse, in real character, the people of America are probably as far from anarchical as any in the world.

To pretend that all men are absolutely and immutably equal in any respect is just as absurd as to pretend that they are all equal in personal beauty. Our commonplaces, no doubt, deny this fact so generally, so strenuously, and so confidently that many good Americans hardly ever realize that they know it. But when our country, now and again, has come to occasions of actual stress, it has never characteristically striven for the destruction of public order. Fantastic though the suggestion may at first seem, accordingly, I for one have come to believe that the saving faith in order so deeply ingrained in American character may be traced in no small degree to the neglected doctrine of election. Throughout the Puritan generations our ancestors never swerved from the conviction that most of us must always have our betters, and

that our betters are better than we, not from any blind or unjust chance, but because it has pleased God to grant them the boon of eternal life. Our betters are hard to find, no doubt, and hard to recognize; and the Lord may have sown them anywhere. But He has surely sown them somewhere among us; and it is our unavoidable duty to seek them and find them; and when they are sought and found, to follow them.

And furthermore, there can be little doubt that certain of the principles and of the institutions which we have come to believe most peculiarly characteristic of our independent American republic are traceable, in no small degree, to this same Calvinistic doctrine of election. Take, for example, that official letter from John Cotton to the noblemen in England, at which we glanced a little

while ago. Beyond question the spirit of it seems deeply American; and when we ask what makes it seem so we shall almost surely answer that it is so characteristically American because it is so firmly, uncompromisingly democratic. Yet if we may trust, as we probably may, the account of John Cotton's opinions reverently set forth by his grandson, Cotton Mather, we must believe that Cotton had small liking for what he called "Athenian Democracy." On the contrary, as Mather records, when Cotton arrived in New England, and "found the whole country in a perplexed and a divided state as to their civil constitution," he consented to a request "that he would, from the laws wherewith God governed his ancient people, form an abstract of such as were of a moral and a lasting equity." Whereupon, he "effectually recom-

mended it unto them that none should be electors, nor elected therein, except such as were visible subjects of our Lord Jesus Christ, personally confederated in our churches. In these, and many other ways, he propounded unto them an endeavor after a theocracy, as near as might be to that which was the glory of Israel."

Somewhere in Cotton's own writings, indeed, the word "theocracy" occurs, as indicating his highest ideal of civil government. In view of this, the original meaning of his letter to his noble friends seems distinctly different from that which democratic posterity is at present disposed complacently to find there. Cotton really seems to have believed that so far as possible the actual government of human society should be placed in the hands of those human beings who were happy enough to find

themselves among God's elect. Among these, it is fair to assume, he was content to count the godly gentlemen who thought of emigrating to New England; but he knew all the while, as everybody knows, that the grace of God is not apt to descend hereditarily in prolonged family lines. Ministers' sons and deacons' daughters are proverbially believed to be sinners. In all probability, therefore, Cotton's true meaning was that if the descendants of his friends should prove to possess such spiritual qualities as illustrated their ancestors, the people of New England would gladly recognize them as the betters of ordinary mankind; but that if in future generations it should please God to shower His grace more freely elsewhere, and to withdraw it from those particular strains of blood, the people of New England would remain true to

the will of God, and would treat persons obviously not of the elect with no more respect than God had decreed their due. Clearly enough, this principle was bound to develop into such democratic ones as America now generally cherishes. Clearly enough at the same time, it was by no means democratic in conscious origin; it was rather based on conviction that the duty of God-fearing men is to seek God's elect everywhere, and when they are found, to give them highest reverence.

Again, there can be little doubt that deep faith in the doctrine of election had much to do with the establishment of that widely diffused system of education, — much like the system established by Calvin at Geneva, — which, from the very planting of New England, has been so characteristic of our own country. It might please God at

any moment to grant His grace to a human being of the lowliest origin. In such event, that human being really deserved not only personal reverence, but the widest possible opportunity for usefully and fruitfully diffusing the influence of his regenerate spirit. To leave him in ignorance would be to limit the chance of his usefulness. The more prudent course, accordingly, was to train everybody as highly as possible, so that when a chosen vessel of the Lord happened to overflow anywhere with His grace, it might overflow grammatically. It had pleased the Lord to sow a little wheat among the tares. It was best for men that they should be able to reap and to harvest as much as might be of what the Lord had sown.

We need hardly carry these considerations farther. We must already have carried them far enough to serve our

purpose. This is only to ascertain the vital origin of our national temper. And this origin, I hope we may agree, can be traced to instinctive idealism of pre-revolutionary England, strengthened and defined by the intensely orderly idealism ingrained in those who faithfully accepted the Calvinistic creed. Such were the forefathers of modern America.

The outward forms animated by this spirit, the while, have often seemed at odds with it. One can easily see why. The fathers of New England planted themselves on the coast of an absolutely savage continent. To support and to maintain life they had to make a wilderness habitable, and to establish among themselves a practicable system of government. In Bradford's "History of Plymouth Plantation," so happily preserved, nothing is more impressive, as one

turns the pages from beginning to end, than the manner in which its records tend less and less to emphasize the spiritual aspirations of the Pilgrims; more and more to touch on the material circumstance of their busy, increasingly complicated and increasingly prosperous, worldly affairs. It is the fortune or misfortune of this world everywhere that even the noblest spirits demand for earthly existence the incumbrance of material bodies. These same material bodies, whether individual or political, are apt, if they conduct themselves prudently, to enjoy an increasing degree of material prosperity. Such prosperity involves increasing complexity of material questions, inexorably demanding settlement. If men, or if bodies politic, neglect this kind of demand, they neglect it at their peril. The mortal bodies essential to the existence of their im-

mortal spirits must pay the penalty of such neglect. On the other hand, if these same men or bodies politic devote a considerable degree of their attention to the needs of self-preservation and of posterity, they cannot avoid a superficial appearance of considerable and perhaps undue devotion to material things. The historical conditions of American life, even to the present day, have involved just this kind of apparently material activity. In less than three centuries we of America have been compelled, among other things, to tame a whole continent, which the Pilgrim Fathers found untrodden by civilized man. It is not surprising that strangers who observe our outward semblance, as distinguished from those who begin to know our inner spirit, should suppose us to be at heart material and practical.

Yet, all the while, the material and

practical characteristics even of modern America have hovering about them a quality of their own which almost reveals the deeper characteristics on which we have been chiefly dwelling. What I mean was vividly called to my mind not long ago by the remark of a shrewd French man of business, who had spent a few months in the United States. "Your rich men," he said, in effect, "are different from any others I have ever come across. Like rich men everywhere, of course, they want to make money, and spend the greater part of their time in successfully trying to do so. But there is a real difference between a rich American and a rich European. When your European is trying to make money or has successfully made it, he thinks of it primarily only as money, or as wealth; to him it is an end. Your rich American, on the

other hand, regards his money not as wealth, but as power; to him it is only a means toward something else." That remark, I think, shows true insight. The difference between a man who looks upon wealth as an end and one who looks upon wealth rather as a means is the difference between one whose vision is not keen enough to see beyond merely material things and one who, whether he realize it or not, aspires beyond material things to things ideal. The ideals of many individuals, of course, are grotesquely trivial. We are all familiar, for example, with the vagaries of certain compatriots who delight in the indefinite elaboration of colossal hotels which they never care to make lucrative. The wonder is, not that such absurdities sometimes occur, but that they do not occur oftener. In fact, we are apt to think them obtusely eccentric. Your

typical American man of affairs, grossly material though he seem, proves, as you grow to know him, the most beneficent patron of purely ideal ends and purposes who has yet shown himself on this planet. If you doubt this, consider for a moment the unprecedented endowments which, with no priestly urgence to impel them, our men of fortune have lavished and lavish still on our innumerable institutions of learning and of charity, on our universities and our libraries and our museums, on our hospitals and on countless other institutions whose office is to mitigate the sadly various natural shocks, spiritual and bodily, to which human flesh is heir.

That America seems superficially material, of course, nobody would pretend to deny. Yet by this time I hope we may agree that whoever appreciates America can hardly feel this materialism

to be the fundamental feature of our national character. All the same, our inevitable preoccupation with things of this material world has had on our character one very deep influence. Not only our prosperity, but our very history would have been impossible unless from the beginning we had protected ourselves by the establishment of political institutions which should enable our civic society to prosper. In the beginning these political institutions were in great measure experimental, one might almost say accidental. What is more, they were inevitably affected by the temper, the conviction, the character of the men and of the generation who were called upon to found them. This generation, we have seen, was a generation of pre-revolutionary Englishmen, whose idealism, at least in New England, was fortified by the peculiarly

orderly idealism of Calvinistic conviction. They thought of themselves as Englishmen, and for five generations their children thought of England as home, just as Canadians or Australians who have never crossed the sea think of England as home to this day; but between our elder English home and the colonies which throughout those five generations were flourishing and strengthening on the eastern seaboard of North America, there rolled the Atlantic, wider than any earthly sea can ever be again in these swift days of electricity and steam. The isolation of America up to the very moment of the American Revolution was something which throughout future times can hardly have a parallel anywhere.

The consequence of this fact no one realized a century ago; few have realized it even yet. Remote at once from

any society but their own, and from that pressing and incessant force of traditional historic continuity which inevitably checked, modified, and suppressed the course of pre-revolutionary impulse in ancestral England, America, unnoticed and unnoticing, developed between 1620 and 1775 a new historical continuity, a new native tradition of its own. We came to have ways of living, ways of thinking, methods of government, precedents of local law, sanctioned for ourselves by the supreme fact that they had descended to us immemorially. Without realizing what they were doing, the descendants of those pre-revolutionary English idealists who settled our continent had developed the unhampered pre-revolutionary idealism, common to all Englishmen in the days of our emigration, into a new and unprecedentedly ideal tradition,

strengthened by the unhampered continuity of their own peculiar convictions and institutions throughout a full hundred and fifty years.

Thus considered, the American Revolution becomes newly comprehensible. It was no miracle, as the legends of our public schools so often pretend. It was not, as it believed itself, the actual origin of a new people ; it was only the first unanswerable assertion that this new people had come into existence. It was not the origin of our nation ; it was only the birth of our national consciousness. And it had wide and deep analogies to physical birth, to the coming into life, at once conscious and independent, of some new and vigorous human being. That is always a miracle, if you stop to consider it. Existence is a miracle, everything is a miracle, if you will pry deeply enough into

the secrets of eternity. But the greatest of miracles, which embraces all the rest, is not those lesser marvels which habit has made men fancy to be commonplace; it is the supreme order of the universe.

To descend from these flights, what I am actually trying to make clear is that no one can really understand the American Revolution until he realizes how inevitable it was. It was no accident, though doubtless accidents precipitated and inflamed it. It was an irrepressible conflict between the new, unconsciously developed historical tradition of our American colonies and the elder historical tradition of England. Already the temper of England had changed far more deeply than ours has changed even yet from the temper of that pre-revolutionary England of the seventeenth century which sent our ancestors on their way across almost trackless seas.

The circumstances which brought about the American Revolution were in no deep sense of its essence. It might conceivably have been delayed; it could not have been averted. Like any historical crisis of which the result has proved so vital, it was an instance of indomitable historical force; and historical force, men are beginning dimly to see, is as much in the course of nature as are those other, less intricate forces which have been in greater or less degree reduced to the terms of what we complacently call science.

Historical circumstance, no doubt, — the origin of our national temper combining with the spirit of the time when it became conscious — impelled our Revolution to express itself in radical terms. In all probability it would have used them at any time; and at any time it would have used them sin-

cerely and passionately. The newly conscious people of America believed itself something new under the sun. It believed, as its descendants still believe, that it altered the course of human events. Perhaps it did; but not quite in the manner which is oftenest supposed. For tradition still obscures its features. The American Revolution took place during that last quarter of the eighteenth century which was hurrying all Europe toward the revolutionary convulsions whereby so much of the elder structure of European society was dashed to pieces. The whole width of the eighteenth-century Atlantic could in no wise prevent the echoes of the revolutionary utterances then resounding throughout Europe, from reverberating sonorously among ourselves. Yet as we contemplate the results of our American Revolution through the years which

have elapsed since the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, and compare them with what has ensued from the slightly later Revolutions of Europe, we can hardly help being struck with the contrast. In sum, the results of European revolution were destructive; those of revolution here proved rather constructive.

To account for this, we need not seek far or for miracle. Although our people hardly realize the fact even now, the fact remains that our American Revolution was unique. Alone in history, its truly vital purpose was not to overthrow an immemorial system of government and society, replacing it by some philanthropic and untested new one. The vital purpose of the American Revolution was, with all the power of a newly conscious national existence, to maintain against reactionary

innovation that historical continuity, those immemorial traditions of our own, which the unbroken experience of five generations had proved favorable among ourselves to prosperity and to righteousness. Alone of revolutions ours was essentially conservative, conservative in such sense as one might fancy an uprising in England to be to-day which should resist to the death a royal veto — legal, if you will, but disused since before the accession of King George the Third. Therein — in the essential, unrecognized conservatism of its impulse — lies the vital, constructive strength of our American Revolution — the convulsion of historic force, the birth-throe which brought our national character at last to consciously independent life.

Saying this, we have perhaps said enough; but we have wandered so far together that we may perhaps do well

to recall our course. Our purpose has been to trace the origin and the development of the American nation. We have seen how the institutions from which our national temper fondly fancies itself to have derived its origin are really not its parents, but rather its children; not the cause of it, but rather the effect. And if we have not widely erred, we have seen why the most deep characteristics of our country, during the period of its progress from successful assertion of its independence to its present unsought imperial power, are to be found, not so much in its acts or in its deeds, as in those intangible realities, the ideals to which its temper has most characteristically responded. As a people, we are really unique, even though we be not unique in such manner as we generally suppose. We are not miraculously new; as truly as

any other nation which ever came into being, we have had our historical antecedents; but those historical antecedents have a quality peculiarly their own, peculiarly ours. Alone of recorded nations, ours has sprung from the unhampered growth into established historical tradition of pre-revolutionary idealism.

II

LIBERTY

AMERICAN nationality, as we have seen, is a spiritual fact. Elusive though such facts be, they are no less real — rather, indeed, they are more potent — than any palpable realities of flesh and blood. Their characteristics are indelible; and the characteristics most deep in our nationality to-day may be traced straight, I think, to those which animated the first settlers of Virginia and of New England. These, we have seen, were Englishmen of the years which were speeding England towards the great English Revolution of the seventeenth century. Like all people of pre-revolutionary epochs they were susceptible,

far beyond men of other periods, to the influence of ideals. Whatever the complexion of their passing politics, they ardently believed that earnest human effort can recast outworn systems of human law, into forms modelled after that immutable ideal truth — the Law of God, or of Nature. In New England, furthermore, this idealism was fortified and enhanced by the deeply ideal conviction of divine order inherent in devout acceptance of Calvinistic dogma. Finally, we have seen, this orderly idealism, so firmly implanted in the spirit of pristine America, was strengthened into immemorial and unwittingly national tradition by the lapse of five generations between the founding of the colonies and the outbreak of the American Revolution.

Superficially, no doubt, America has seemed devoted to merely material in-

terests. Nothing could have prevented it from seeming so. In little more than a century we have had to tame a savage continent. A task like this demands unremittent work, not only of brains, but of hands; and hands busy with hard work cannot help becoming gnarled and horny. If the brains which guide those hands the while guide them with wholesome vigor, the combination of head and hand will result in something more than handiwork; as a matter of course, it will produce wealth, and all the perplexing responsibilities which go therewith. So much the preachers are always ready to tell you, pointing out the interminable moral responsibilities of the rich, as stewards of the Lord. The preachers are apt, the while, to neglect the truth that such moral responsibility demands, among other things, practical good sense. Whoever has

business on his hands must attend to it, on pain of finding his hands empty. No matter how devout the Lord's stewards may be, they cannot do his work acceptably without economic intelligence. Such intelligence the instinctive idealists of our country have generally displayed. Emerson himself made his lectures pay, and knew where to store his savings; and our less obviously spiritual compatriots, whose material prosperity has been on a larger scale, have shown similar wisdom. They have been led thereby to the realization that wealth, as it accumulates, demands increasing attention. And so, during the past century, as the material energy of America has quickened and our national wealth has swollen, good Americans have naturally increased both the amount and the intensity of their attention to things merely of this world. In this state of

affairs, nothing could have saved us from that apparent materialism so disturbing to moralists who contemplate only the surface of American life. Yet all the while, one has only to be American, — or perhaps it were better to say, one has only to sympathize with the ancestral traditions of our country, — to understand how our superficial materialism no more means that we are materialists at heart than horny hands mean that the spirit of their possessor is base.

We have generalized, perhaps, too long. To remind ourselves of just what we mean, we may best turn to an obvious phase of our national idealism, familiar to any one who knows the temper of modern America. This is the devotion with which Americans cherish the material emblem of our nationality, — our national flag, the Stars and Stripes.

This devotion now seems so instinctive as to be among the laws of Nature; yet, not long ago, I came on a curious reminder of how little it was developed in Revolutionary times. I chanced to be consulting a copy of Sparks's edition of the writings of Washington, which had belonged, from the time of its publication in 1834, to Mr. George Ticknor. In the index my eye was attracted by a manuscript addition to the printed references. The handwriting of this memorandum was exactly like that in which he had written his name on the fly-leaf during the year when the book was published; and the one fault which he then seems to have found with the index was the omission of a reference noted in the following words: "Flag, — Union, first hoisted at Cambridge." I turned to the passage he referred to. It occurs in a letter written by Washington to

Joseph Reed, from Cambridge, on the fourth of January, 1776. The letter begins with a few ironical sentences about "his Majesty's most gracious speech, breathing sentiments of tenderness and compassion for his deluded American subjects." A number of these speeches, Washington goes on to say, had been distributed broadcast by the Boston gentry, — that is, by the loyalists then besieged in the capital city of New England. "And, farcical enough," he proceeds, "we gave great joy to them, without knowing or intending it; for on that day, the day which gave being to the new army, but before the proclamation came to hand, we had hoisted the union flag in compliment to the United Colonies. But, behold, it was received in Boston as a token of the deep impression the speech had made upon us, and as a signal of

submission. So we hear by a person out of Boston last night. By this time I presume they begin to think it strange that we have not made a formal surrender of our lines."

When we stop to consider this animated little anecdote the strangest feature of it proves to be the precision with which it reminds us of how our recently cherished flag came into being. The flag unfurled at Cambridge by Washington, six months before the Declaration of Independence, was not, of course, "Old Glory"; it had, I believe, the thirteen stripes, but the union emblem in the corner was still that of Great Britain — the united crosses of St. George and St. Andrew. Yet that union flag, as Washington's letter shows, was not intended to symbolize anything British; it was distinctly intended to symbolize, for the first time,

that nationality of America which the Stars and Stripes have so inspiringly symbolized and protected in later years. This nationality treasures with peculiar jealousy the faith that America has always been of right and enthusiastically free. Yet, so lately as 1776, intelligent native Americans — and no one who knows the history of the Boston loyalists can question that they were both native Americans and tolerably intelligent ones — could turn their spy-glasses from the crest of Beacon Hill toward the heights beyond the tidal basin of the Charles River, and discern floating there the Union Flag of America without the slightest suspicion of what it meant. As Washington said, it was hoisted "out of compliment to the United Colonies," colonies united in armed assertion of that American liberty which broke forever the union of the

British empire. Yet it impressed the loyalists of Boston as a signal of submission; for the only liberty which those lovers of elder tradition had ever believed in was the liberty which finds its familiar expression in the choral assertion that Britons never shall be slaves; and the only union which they could imagine was that which should be renewed by reconciliation of America with the Crown.

A very few years later no such complacent blunder could have occurred. None such can ever occur again. That same Union Flag, or rather the flag which has developed from it, has long been an object of almost superstitious devotion. Not long ago, it was reported, the managers of some political campaign in the city of New York conceived the impressive idea of displaying, side by side, in one of the principal streets, the American flag and the red flag of An-

archy, accompanied with the question, "Which will you vote for?" If we may trust the public prints, the region of the city where this exhibition occurred was chiefly frequented by people of respectable proclivities, — solid men of business and the decent sort of persons regularly in their employ. Such a public as this, and none could be less like a mob, found the display impious. The placing of the emblem of Anarchy beside our national flag stirred them, as mediæval Christians might have been stirred if they had found some emblem of Islam placed beside the Cross. With unanimous fervor, these patriotic Americans proceeded to pull down the offending banners. The red flag of Anarchy they tore to tatters. The Stars and Stripes, on the other hand, they saluted with bared heads, and saw that it was reverently carried to a place of safety.

Again, this same sentiment occasionally becomes legally portentous. In the city of Boston, for example, there is, or there used to be, a local statute protecting the flag from such profane use as it has sometimes been put to in advertisements. Some patriotic celebration was at hand there. A particularly patriotic tradesman, himself a veteran of the Civil War, with an excellent record, conceived the idea of edifying the people who might pass his window during the ceremonies by substituting for his usual display of wares a treasured little collection of war relics. To emphasize his loyal intentions, he spread in his window an American flag, on which he placed his cherished memorials of the years during which he had risked his life for it. And presently he found himself in the hands of the police, charged with violation of the fervent law which com-

manded that the flag should never be used for advertising purposes.

One might go on indefinitely. One might recall the almost ritual adorations of the flag occasionally performed in American public schools. One might recall, with a queer mixture of amusement and admiration, those living flags of school children, who now and again sing songs of welcome to passing processions. It would all bring us to the same fact. The American people are too sensible to have superstitious respect for any mere strips of colored bunting. In mere strips of colored bunting combined in our national flag, the while, they recognize a symbol of something so profoundly inspiring that they demand for the very bunting such unqualified respect as in other countries is demanded for sovereignty otherwise symbolized. We of America have an artless habit of

deriding and even of berating certain laws in continental Europe which require everybody, as a matter of decency, to revere the person of the sovereign. The sentiment which inspires these regulations against what is generally described by the unpronounceable term, *lèse-majesté*, we imagine to be alien to any sentiment which can animate a free people like ourselves. But the only real difference between such sentiments and the sentiment with which we cherish the flag, is that we prefer to see the fact of our national existence symbolized in woven stuff, while certain other peoples consent to see the fact of theirs symbolized in the passing men or women who succeed one another in guiding their national destinies. In each case, the thing for which respect is demanded is not really the symbol: it is not the sovereign himself, with all his infirmi-

ties and failings; it is not the flag itself, so often unglorified by volatile dyes or hasty stitching; it is rather and wholly the national ideal which some peoples find embodied in human forms, and which we have preferred to find embodied in a form splendidly inanimate.

Ideals are vague things, transcendental in their eternally intangible persistence. It is hard to define them, hopeless to imprison them completely within any net of words. Perhaps the most deeply persistent phase of them is that, though we may forever aspire toward them, we can never quite attain them. The inspiration which they breathe into our spirits comes not least from the utter infinitude of their nature. The will of God shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven only when His kingdom shall have come. Till then, so long as earth is earth, so long

as life is only this swift passage from cradle to grave, every ideal aspiration must be hampered and thwarted by fleshly conditions. Confusions must ensue, inconsistencies and despairs. The purpose of life and the conduct of life can seldom quite harmonize. Yet no errors of conduct can ever lead us so far astray that we can solemnly deny the deeper truth of unfulfilled purpose. You can no more know a nation like ours without sympathetic understanding of its ideals than you can know a human being without sympathetic insight into the spirit which his words may sometimes have served to reveal, and his deeds perhaps to obscure.

Among the ideals which have been most passionately cherished by America, we have seen, are the political ideals of our sensitively conscious nation; the reason why we so ardently reverence

our flag is that, from the depths of our hearts, we believe it to symbolize them. From the very beginning, as every tradition of the Revolution must remind us, the flag of our country has been held to symbolize Liberty. From the very beginning, as that letter of Washington's to Joseph Reed so clearly states, our flag has been held to symbolize, as well, the ideal of Union. From the very beginning, too, as we may remind ourselves by searching wherever we will throughout our national literature — and for that matter, throughout our public utterances, memorable and trivial alike, — it has been held to symbolize the ideal of Democracy. Yet, all the while, whoever ponders over the course of our history must soon perceive that these three ideals have never presented themselves as of quite equal importance. Better, perhaps, there has never been a

period in our history when one or another of the three has not for a while seemed the chief.

Throughout the Revolution, for example, there can be no doubt that the flag which has grown into the Stars and Stripes symbolized, above and beyond all things else, the ideal of Liberty. At a later period of our history — one may almost say throughout the first three quarters of the nineteenth century — the flag tended more and more to symbolize the ideal of Union, which could be made secure by no less tragic test of its potency than that of civil war. The Revolution won American Liberty; the Civil War saved American Union. Liberty and Union assured, we have assumed them, as men assume the breath of life. And thus, perhaps unwittingly, we have been disposed to feel that the ideal most signal among

the three symbolized by the flag of our country, is our third national ideal, the ideal of Democracy. Our three chief ideals are, doubtless, intermingled still; they can never be separated so long as America remains America. Yet we shall come to understand America most rightly, I think, if we consider them, as America has historically reverenced them, not together, but in turn.

The ideal of Liberty, we have seen, is deeply associated with every memory and every tradition of the American Revolution. The very name of that crisis of historic force, — of the convulsion which brought our country into conscious existence, — must instantly arouse more or less distinct visions of Sons of Liberty, of Liberty poles, of Phrygian caps, and of innumerable other symbols and phrases distractingly like those symbols and phrases of uni-

versal liberty which a few years later suffused the atmosphere of revolutionary France. In those days our sympathy with France was most eager. If I remember rightly, the first effigy which graced the coinage of the United States was engraved from a French design. It represented a female head with the name of Liberty hovering somewhere near, as it still hovers above the heads which adorn our pocket money. The artist who conceived the pristine image, however, was not content with such literal indication of its nature. He loved symbolism. So, by way of indicating that Liberty is free and unconfined, he had the happy inspiration of designing her head with uncombed locks of hair streaming to the breeze. To dress the hair of the Goddess of Liberty, he seems to have felt, would have been in some degree to intimate that

she was not absolutely free; and absolute freedom was what Liberty meant to the mind of any revolutionary Frenchman.

Those unconfined and streaming locks we may cheerfully admit to be most happily symbolic of the ideal of Liberty, as it presented itself to eighteenth-century France. Somehow or other they seem less significant of that ideal, as it has been cherished in America. Our later coinage, though rather more ugly, — the most patriotic of Americans would hardly venture to pronounce our republic conspicuous for numismatic taste, — has been more sedate; it has agreed in representing a Goddess of Liberty who has submitted to the process of hair-dressing. And this neater image really suits us better. The flowing hair of the earlier head, deeply agreeable to the sentiment of the first

French republic, symbolized a conception which native Americans, when not confused by some bewildering process of argument or analysis, must generally feel somewhat alien to that which has animated the more stable republic of the United States. The ideal of Liberty cherished by revolutionary Europe was not quite identical with the ideal of Liberty which has been cherished by independent America. The difference may be hard to state ; but no American can help feeling it, and none, I think, can honestly deny it.

In seeking a clue to this difference, one's natural impulse is to ask how Americans have been apt to define their own peculiar ideal. Such inquiry brings us straight to some of the classic utterances of revolutionary America, in which the name of Liberty is most passionately invoked. Among these, one of

the earliest is so sonorous that it still echoes in popular memory and school declamations. This is the climax of Patrick Henry's great speech in the Virginian Convention of 1775: —

"The war is inevitable — and let it come. I repeat it, sir, let it come! It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace — but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains or slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! — I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!"

Those final words, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" have been familiar throughout America ever since they were first uttered. Taken by themselves, they sound inspiringly unreserved; they seem as free from any earthly limitation as the streaming hair of our original dollars. Yet when you put them even for an instant in their historic place, — when you consider even no more than the single paragraph which Patrick Henry pronounced just before them, calling forth the enthusiastic response not only of Virginia but of all her sister colonies, — you will begin to feel that what he meant by liberty was not an abstraction, but a concrete fact. The liberty for which his brethren of the North were beginning to fight, the liberty for which the American Revolution was later carried to its triumphal end, was no indefinite

and portentously shadowy thing. It was not a bit like that pristine image of our mint, with its streaming hair, and its incendiary torch left out chiefly because there was no room for it within the circle of the coin. What Patrick Henry meant by liberty, and what subsequent America has meant by liberty, was first and foremost native independence; it was the political freedom of America from all control, from all coercion, from all interference by any power foreign to our own American selves.

Almost to that moment Americans had never realized that the mother country had insensibly grown into a condition where at heart she could no longer understand the temper of her vagrant child. Almost to the moment when our Revolution declared itself, plenty of Americans who had never set foot beyond the limits of

our Western continent still had the innocence to speak of England as "home." In January, 1776, as we have seen, when Washington hoisted his Union flag at Cambridge, good gentlemen of Boston fancied that his heart had been softened by the persuasive eloquence of King George the Third. So lately as that, plenty of born Americans could not yet perceive that, in five generations, the divergence of our own traditional and unwritten law and custom from the traditional and unwritten law and custom of the mother-country had grown fatal. But it had. In a hundred ways, the England of 1775 had become a stranger to the America which it believed a part of itself. The liberty which Patrick Henry asserted was the national liberty of America. Submission to interference by England, like submission to interference by any

other power whatsoever, suddenly presented itself in the light of ignoble submission to external control. Such submission the very traditions which marked us as ancestrally English most hotly disdained. At heart, after all, our pristine ideal of liberty was English. The force which made it vital sprang from our hereditary unwillingness to permit any foreign interference with the legal rights — the liberties, in the old English sense of the term — which we had unwittingly developed for ourselves.

During the year following that in which Patrick Henry uttered his still living words, the ideal which they so passionately proclaimed found classical expression in the Declaration of Independence. Almost from the moment of its publication, this first official assertion of our American nationality has been held in a reverence for which all Ameri-

cans must be deeply grateful. This very reverence, however, has tended, like much other reverence in this world, toward something like superstition. The Declaration of Independence has long been treated as if it were impenetrably sacred. Like the formulas which enshrine religious creeds, it has been treated with such respect that, while everybody has been expected to know it, and to repeat its phrases on occasions of solemnity, nobody has been allowed to inspect it critically without exposing himself to suspicion of heresy. It has been cherished like the Tables of the Law which came straight from the hands of God. In both cases, such sentiment has had precious value; in both, it begins to seem outworn. For better or worse we are passing into a period of the higher criticism; and the higher criticism relentlessly reminds us

that no historical document or fact, however reverend, can be understood by any mere process of worship. It is not unpatriotic, accordingly, it is only wise to ask ourselves what the Declaration of Independence really is, — to what class of literature it properly belongs.

You can hardly turn to it without feeling the passionate fervor of its rhetoric. With a rhythmic power such as raises a few state papers in history to the height of lasting literature, it must always stir the most deeply vital emotion of America. For all that, when you begin to consider the question of classification, when you ask yourself with what less significant documents this masterpiece should be grouped, if judged by the regular processes which from time to time arrange human affairs in momentary order, the answer is clear. In its historical aspect, the Dec-

laration of Independence is such a thing as nowadays we colloquially call a party platform.

The moment you admit this fact, you perceive in the Declaration two or three features which our conventional adoration of it has somewhat obscured. Like any party platform it appeals to public opinion for the support of a definite political policy; and, like most such documents, it devotes considerable space to a relentless arraignment of its opponents. Arraignments of this kind are regularly drawn up to this day in a manner which we can best understand by comparing them with legal indictments. In a properly drawn legal indictment — and the men who drafted the Declaration of Independence were familiar with the processes of pleading, and with the formal idioms of English law — a sound pleader states every

charge which he can think of against the person whom he opposes. Such charges may be made, as they are made in this particular case, with indignant sincerity. Oftener they are made coolly, tentatively. In both instances their purpose is the same. You allege as many reasons as you can find for putting the other man in the wrong, with the hope of catching him, however elusive his ingenuity, in some strand of your widespread net. Thus considered, the arraignment of King George the Third in the Declaration of Independence groups itself with the arraignments of political opponents which envenom party platforms everywhere. It is, doubtless, among the most fervent in history; it is contagiously intense, it seems tremendously genuine; it rises, we may gladly admit, to the region of prophetic inspiration. But the very fact

that it rises to this quivering height should help to remind us that we can hardly accept it, any more than we could accept an utterance in completely lyric form, as a literal statement of cold fact. Like any party platform, it arraigns the chief opponent of its policy at the bar of public opinion. It sets forth count after count against him. If one fail, another may stand; if any stand, its determined purpose may be accomplished.

Again, like so many party platforms, it indulges itself in a kind of rhetoric aptly characterized by a phrase now widely familiar. Apparently, however, it was held a novelty when Rufus Choate used it in a political letter, written no longer ago than 1857. And here are the words as Choate struck them off: "Those glittering and sounding generalities of natural right which constitute the Declaration of Independence." It

is characteristic of the vitality possessed by the Declaration of Independence that the two ends of Choate's clause have fallen apart in popular memory. People have long forgotten what the term "glittering generalities" was first applied to; but the term itself has passed, alone and unresisted, into the idiom of America. One still hears it constantly applied to impressively insignificant rhetoric. There has rarely been a more durable characterization of such commonplace as at first stirs eager emotion, and then, as soon as you try by logical means to reduce it to concrete terms, evaporates into mere syllables. And the merit of Choate's phrase does not stop with its intrinsic aptness; his application of it was by no means all wrong. However sincere and earnest the Declaration of Independence may have been, its glittering generalities are no more to be accepted

as statements of literal fact than are the separate counts which prolong less memorable party platforms and legal indictments.

These "glittering and sounding generalities of natural right," no doubt, have had on our national temper an effect as deep as that of the royal arraignment. Americans are apt fervently to believe that King George the Third was a personally malignant tyrant, and that he knew it, and that he meant to be. And they are apt to grow warmly resentful if anybody ventures to scrutinize the assertion that "all men . . . are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights;" and "that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Their fervor is a little blinding, however. Just what these impressive terms mean, they do not stop patiently to consider.

It is worth our while to do so, and to ask exactly how far we are soberly prepared to carry out the principles we are apt so eagerly to profess. The sacred text asserts, for one thing, that all human beings have a right to life. Taken literally, this would mean that no human beings have a moral right to perform one of the acts which the Declaration of Independence specifically maintains as among the most precious legal rights of the new nation whose independence it declares. This is the right of independent States to levy war. War frequently takes the lives of those against whom it is levied; yet according to the strict terms of the generality which glitters in the Declaration, our enemies, who at worst are human beings, have as much right to life as anybody else. That assertion, that everybody has inalienable right to life, can

betray us before long, we find, into conclusions hardly in accord with the general course of our own or of any other civilized history.

Again, liberty, stirring though the term has been to the ideal temperament of America, proves elusive when you come to definition. The extreme logic of liberty would evidently assert the right of everybody to behave at all times exactly as he happens to desire. Complete liberty would warrant you in entering any premises which chanced to attract your eye, and in helping yourself therein to any valuables which looked desirable. Such liberties as these, taken with the property of others, have occurred throughout the history of society. From time immemorial, accordingly, society has found it convenient to control them by the very simple process of locking up persons who are

excessively prone to this kind of self-indulgence; and America has never been so unsocial as to deny the necessity of common jails. When you stop to reflect, you will be at pains to reconcile the locking up of anybody with the unqualified maintenance of his positive, inalienable right to absolute liberty. The very existence of a prison obscures some radiance of the glittering generality so dear to us; yet we have never tried to get along without prisons. The logic of such liberty as many eloquent reformers have dreamed of, would in fact involve the inalienable right of everybody to go wherever he pleases, and to do there whatever he likes. This is evidently nothing more nor less than anarchy; and anarchy is so abhorrent to America that we forbid anarchists access to our ports.

And when you strive to grasp our

third inalienable right, — the right to the pursuit of happiness, — it proves less tangible still. If the happiness which you desire to pursue chance to coincide with that which attracts me, — if you and I, for example, hunger for the same cake, or aspire to the hand of the same lady, — it is hard to see how our divergently inalienable rights can be reconciled by any less deplorable process than a free fight. One might answer, perhaps, that the third right asserted in the Declaration is not a right to happiness, but only a right to the pursuit thereof. One might go on to reason that insomuch as pursuit ceases when its object is captured, the right to the pursuit of happiness, so gloriously asserted by the Declaration of Independence, implicitly denies that anybody has any right whatever to happiness itself. In brief, one might easily

lose one's self in perturbing snarls of logic. The end of them all would be regretful perception of Rufus Choate's rather pitiless wisdom.

Of course the fact that a sounding phrase may rightly be described as a "glittering generality" does not imply that it is untrue; it does, however, prove the phrase indefinite. The moment you try to reduce to concrete terms the rights asserted for America by the Declaration of Independence, you find yourself in vague regions. You may reach conclusions eminently satisfactory to yourself. You will hardly reach conclusions which shall equally satisfy the next man. At best, you will involve yourself in endless disputes, which will prove in the end less fruitful than minding your business without troubling yourself about any general principles. This truth Americans have been apt tacitly to accept.

Those of our countrymen who are wisest in practical affairs have never dreamed of renouncing their beloved natural rights; but so long as they have managed to do the day's work decently, they have neglected the question of how far their practice harmonizes with their preaching. At best, their chief use for "glittering and sounding generalities" has been when they wanted inspiration.

On the other hand, the clause of the Declaration of Independence which next follows these generalities of natural right is of another stripe. The more you read that clause, the more distinctly it emerges, so saliently that before long it grows to seem the substance of the whole. It is not an overstated count in an impassioned indictment; it is by no means a glittering generality; it is a simple assertion of a plain conviction, rooted in the affections of modern

America. "To secure those rights," it begins, — and that clause, of course, is as impalpable as the clauses just before it, — "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Consider that clause as long as you will; and the more assuredly you will feel it completely opposed to all anarchical vagary. To secure rights, it asserts, governments are instituted among men; in other words, society and civilization cannot exist without public order. These governments, it asserts, derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. Very clearly, nobody can be governed unless he live under government. The very fact that the Declaration of Independence bases the power of government on the consent of the governed involves the assumption that always and everywhere there must be some manner of

government for the governed to consent to.

Here, I think, is the core of the Declaration. There has never been a moment in American history when the characteristic temper of our country has even pretended — far less when it has maintained — that society without government is conceivable. In this fundamental assertion of political principle, there is no such partisan animosity as pervades the arraignment of King George; no such vagueness as makes nebulous the glittering and sounding generalities of natural right. There is only a clear statement of the principle which underlies our American ideal of Liberty. Since we have been a conscious nation, we have never swerved from the conviction that as citizens of the United States we have a right to govern ourselves by consenting to the

form of government under which we shall live.

Liberty, as thus conceived, may be described as local; this ideal, Americans have always cherished and proclaimed. They have not, however, troubled themselves to discern it with much precision. From the time of the Declaration of Independence to this day, our air has been full of vague and inspiring assertions of personal liberty as well. Americans, in short, have always supposed themselves to believe in the liberty of the individual; but when you have ventured to inquire just where the liberty of the individual must begin to be controlled they have never been quite able to tell you. When they fall to discussing personal liberty, accordingly, they are apt to lose themselves in mazes of words which sound like declarations of a principle deeply foreign

to their true native temper: namely, that devotees of personal liberty may properly practise their principles by taking personal liberties with other people. Some enthusiasts, indeed, may now and then proceed to this full length, in argument; if so, they will be sure soon to find themselves apart from the mass of their fellow-countrymen, in regions where there is no common consent. Throughout American history, on the other hand, the common consent concerning the ideal of local liberty has been remarkable. From the signing of the Declaration to this day there has been no serious question that Americans must have a government of their own, and that this government must derive its just powers from the consent of those who submit themselves to it.

So far, American sentiment has always been at one. Yet, fervently as

we have cherished the conviction of our right to local liberty, there has always been a puzzling question about it. That any truly American government must derive its just powers from the consent of the governed, everybody has agreed; but as to what the unit of such government should be, nobody seems to have been quite certain. On this point from the beginning there have been prolonged academic discussions. The Declaration of Independence, everybody has admitted, brought into existence a new government, distinct from that under which we had lived while we still acknowledged the sovereignty of England. The real question has been whether this new government was single or composed of thirteen distinct ones. Amid the bewildering disputes about this matter only one fact seems beyond peradventure. Up to the moment of the

Declaration of Independence, the thirteen colonies which thereby declared themselves to be the United States of America, had been practically independent of one another. The only bond which had united them was the common sovereignty of England, which they renounced in common by declaring in common their own American independence.

From this basis, one line of honest and able philosophical argument has reasoned somewhat as follows: It was in common, in General Congress, that the thirteen colonies signed the Declaration of Independence, and thus finally renounced the sovereignty which had previously been common to them all. By that common act, they tacitly assumed in common just so much sovereignty as in common they had previously acknowledged. The very terms

of the Declaration of Independence, in short, have been held to imply that from the beginning the unit of our local liberty in America must inevitably have been the United States. And any one can see that these States could never have maintained the independence on which their separate existence was based, if each had attempted to maintain it apart from the rest. In this line of reasoning there is considerable cogency.

There seems to be about equal cogency in a precisely opposite argument which has been maintained with equal honesty and ability. This contends that the representatives of the thirteen colonies who assembled in General Congress, and there renounced in a common document the only sovereignty which they had previously acknowledged in common, declared by

that very act that the States which they represented were thenceforth to be independent not only of England but also of one another. No one denies that they were momentarily united by a certain bond which they described by the term "Union." The flag which Washington had hoisted at Cambridge, six months before the Declaration of Independence was signed, implied this. On the other hand, it did not necessarily imply that their union was any more durable in its nature than some union which, by means of offensive and defensive alliance, might at this moment combine France, England, Germany, Italy, and other European nations into a confederacy which should style itself the United States of Europe. In other words, this line of reasoning concludes, the original unit of local liberty in America was the single independent State.

At least, I think everybody must agree that in 1776 there was no general consent as to what unit of American government must be sanctioned, as a matter of course, by the consent of the governed. At the same time there was an obvious historical condition which could not help influencing American sentiment. A citizen of any of our original States knew, and had known all his life, the State of which he was a citizen. He knew its name; he knew the forms of its established law; he knew its constitution, both in the legal sense of the word and in the moral; he knew its temper and its habitual conduct. Massachusetts and Virginia, Rhode Island and South Carolina were familiar things, immemorial, ancestral. They were not new facts, flashed into existence by the hardly dry signatures of a document which nothing short of

future experience could prove to be politically vital. Theoretically, no doubt, this document may have been, from its very inception, as potent as it stands to-day. According to strict legal principle, it may be held, the signers of the Declaration could not avoid assuming a common sovereignty over the jurisdictions which they represented in common. Even so, no man in mature life at that moment could find this conception familiar. People might remind themselves of it; but no one instinctively knew it as he knew his name or his family history. Nobody could help knowing, on the other hand, that he was a citizen of the State he lived in, — of Massachusetts, of New York, of Virginia, or of whatever other. To the government of that State he must of course give his consent. The central government, however cogent the rea-

soning which might establish its abstract claim to his loyalty, was a new and a vague thing.

The more familiar you grow with the literature of the revolutionary period, the more definite your impression of this state of feeling becomes. A very considerable body of Americans soon became highly enthusiastic about their national ideal of local liberty. They believed unswervingly that we of America had asserted our inalienable right to be governed only by our own consent. They agreed that American government must oppose, with all its power, any foreign intervention or control. They believed that relaxation of such principle would mean that we were no longer Americans. On the other hand, the American government to which those men gave their consent could not help presenting itself, for the moment,

as most concretely embodied in that government which for each had been habitual. They thought first of the State in which they lived. Many of them recognized the central government as a matter of deep importance; but this central government was too new to excite for itself a very ardent affection. The common nation could not yet be strong with such virtue as can spring only from an established national tradition. To most Americans of those days, whatever their predilections, the pristine unit of our local liberty, except when they stopped to reason about it, must have seemed not so much the nation as the State.

If we of the North will lay aside prejudice for a while, and will admit this fact, we may find in it some deeply instructive suggestions concerning the course of American history during the

century which followed the Revolution. Admitting for the moment that the successful issue of the Revolution left each of the thirteen States in some distinct social and political position, we may generally divide the States into two fairly distinct groups, the Northern and the Southern. During the first half of the nineteenth century various social and economic forces were at work throughout the country. Without attempting to analyze these, we may confidently assume one fact about them. They tended deeply to modify the general social and economic conditions of the Northern States. There, as anywhere else throughout history, social and economic changes insensibly involved changes in popular temper. No such change was more radical than that which affected the habitual conception of local liberty. Almost unperceived

the appeal to general Northern emotion of the separate State in which a citizen chanced to reside became less and less instant; the appeal of the United States became stronger. And as the conception of local liberty tended to shift from one based on habitual loyalty to the State to one based on habitual loyalty to the Union, there came to associate itself with the name of Liberty, still ardently and traditionally cherished, an increasing degree of insistence on the liberty of the individual. In other words, the social and economic changes in the North tended throughout to qualify the pristine American ideal of liberty. Liberty began to lose its intensely local meaning; the conception associated with it took a less peculiarly American, a far more widely generalized form.

The notions of personal liberty which

thus began to root themselves in Northern minds have not proved incompatible with an arbitrary supervision of personal conduct unsurpassed in any despotism. Nothing is more familiar, for example, than the manner in which for years the prohibition laws, so general throughout the North, have vexatiously interfered with innocent personal habit. Any traveller in America must be familiar with statutes which make it criminal for a decent and sober man to order a glass of beer, or even to roll a cigarette. And one of the annoying inconsistencies of modern America is that you can hardly persuade solid citizens, jealously proud of their liberty, that such intermeddling with private conduct is as detestable a piece of tyranny as ever made free men execrate the name of absolute monarchy. Maintaining that government must base itself on the consent of the governed,

the sentiment of our Northern States is often willing to let government interfere with daily life to a degree which sometimes reduces the liberty of the individual to pretty low terms. On the other hand, two principles of individual liberty have rooted themselves in Northern conviction.

The first is that we must not tolerate any such thing as a legally privileged class. In the presence of the law, Northern sentiment maintains, every human being should have equal rights. The two most precious of these seem be the right to trial by jury and the right to a writ of habeas corpus. No matter who picks your pocket or whose you pick, the culprit has a right to be pronounced guilty or innocent by a jury of his peers. No matter what the case against a man who finds himself in the clutches of the law, he has a right

to demand from a legally constituted tribunal the assertion that his detention is warranted. No human being is so low as to be unworthy of these safeguards. None is so high that he may disdain them. It is not that our system of law or any other has ever avoided the inconsistencies inseparable from the conduct of human affairs. There has not been a year in our history when something like privilege has not been discerned and denounced as threatening our national development. But there has not been a moment, either, when characteristic Northern sentiment has not insisted on that phase of individual liberty which is involved in the complete denial of any privilege in the face of sovereign law.

The second conception of individual liberty throughout the North concerns the ballot. In spite of endless error and inconsistency of conduct, Northern

sentiment has tended to identify with the ideal of personal liberty the notion that mature men, once citizens of the United States, have an inalienable right to vote, and to vote pretty often. In order that government shall truly base itself on the consent of the governed, the governed must have frequent opportunity to register that consent — or, if they chance to be in a minority, to record their protest. Here, to be sure, logic has commanded small respect, as eager advocates of female suffrage, among others, are apt pitilessly to reiterate. The spectacle of a Northern election, too, has often been far from conspicuous for purity. But the conviction which underlies our political system is popularly vital. And the ideal of liberty, in Northern minds, has long come to mean not so much the local liberty of the States as the freedom of

every citizen from privilege, and the right of every male citizen to cast his ballot.

It would be historically untrue, I believe, even to intimate that the sentiments concerning liberty which had meanwhile developed in our Southern States involved a fondness for privilege or a disregard of the ballot; yet in various ways the course of Southern development, political and social, during the first half of the nineteenth century, is broadly distinguishable from that of the North. A familiar example of the conditions I now have in mind may be found in the fact that up to the Civil War the politics of the South remained on the whole in the hands of the same kind of people who had controlled things there at the time of the Revolution. In the North and in the South, alike, the early governors of our independent

States were generally men of the socially better sort, men of the class who had enjoyed official distinction under the Crown. This state of things persisted at the South long after the time when it had so far changed in the North that people who had the vanity of pretending to fashion there might occasionally have felt a shade of surprise in meeting the governor at an evening party. Such a trivial fact as this, of course, involves no insistence on rank or privilege. It does, however, imply that the old conception of social status in the North had altered far more radically than in the South. Again, as every one knows, Southern opinion during the nineteenth century tended to increasing emphasis on the originally general belief that the inalienable right to personal freedom was confined to white men. The increase of the system of negro slavery divided the

population of the South into two distinctly separate classes: the whites, who were equal in the face of the law; and the negro slaves, who, in the face of the law, were inferior to the whites. This circumstance of itself prevented the ideal of personal liberty from assuming in the South a form so highly generalized and so radical as it was coming to assume throughout the North.

Meanwhile the social and economic forces which were at work throughout the Southern States had modified the condition of society far less than Northern society was being modified by its own social and economic surroundings. It is not that the Southern States of the middle of the nineteenth century were exactly like the Southern States of revolutionary times; but they remained so little changed from their colonial condition that, to take a con-

crete example, General Lee seems far more like Washington than any Northern soldier or statesman of 1861 seems to any Northerner of 1776. Until the Civil War itself, the type of character in the South tended rather to persist than to alter.

When the social and economic conditions of any region remain so comparatively stable that generation after generation preserves the same broad traits of character, it is pretty safe to conclude that its general conceptions of political ideals will not alter much. We have seen how the social and economic development of the North had tended everywhere to transform the unit of local liberty; Northern citizens, whether they lived in the old States or in the newer, were constantly more apt to feel instinctively that the true unit of our independence was not so much the

separate State as the central government. Throughout the South, meanwhile, the revolutionary conception of the State as the unit of local liberty remained far more vital; perhaps, indeed, it actually strengthened. In 1775, a citizen of Massachusetts had probably been as devoted to his State as had any citizen of South Carolina. In 1860 things had changed. South Carolina appealed to her citizens as eloquently as ever. In Massachusetts, by that time, the appeal of the United States had become distinctly primary, and that of Massachusetts had begun to lose emotional force.

In both cases, the while, belief in local liberty stayed fervent. The divergence of feeling turned only on the question of what the unit of local liberty ought to be. And here we get a clue to the heroic sincerity of our Civil War on

both sides. North and South agreed in unswerving devotion to the principle of liberty, which each treasured as ancestral. But to the North the unit of government, which must derive its just powers from the consent of the governed, had come to seem the government established by the Constitution of the United States; and to the South that unit of government still seemed — as it must everywhere have seemed when the Declaration of Independence was signed — the single State of which an American chanced to be a citizen. As must always be the case when animating ideals come into conflict, each side honestly believed its convictions to be absolutely true. It followed that to each side the contentions of the other were bound to seem deliberately wicked.

This mutual misunderstanding was enhanced by the growing difference of

economic conditions in the two parts of the country. It has so long been customary throughout the North to regard the question of slavery as wholly and only moral, that any Northerner must risk resentful misrepresentation who would venture to suggest that it may equally well be considered as originally economic. Unless we so consider it, however, we can never quite understand it. No commonplace has been more honestly current in the North, for example, than that which asserts the slaves to have been absolutely unpaid laborers, — human beings from the sweat of whose brows a privileged class wrung the whole fruit of their toil. The moment you stop to consider this assertion, however, you must be bound to admit that it does not completely cover the case. A free laborer, no doubt, generally receives his wages in

money, and has the right to acquire as much property as he can. A very considerable portion of free laborers, nevertheless, — inspect free labor wherever you will, — have never been able to earn more money or to acquire more property than is demanded by the actual and pressing needs of daily existence, common to all mankind, — the needs of food, of clothes, and of lodging. Now there can be no question that in return for their services the Southern slaves generally had these needs supplied. They were fed, they were clothed, they were lodged. What is more, they were lodged, fed and clothed, to all appearances, rather better than they could have lodged, fed, and clothed themselves on any wages which they could have earned. The fact that they were legally regarded as the property of others, — that they could be bought and sold

against their wills, — did not impair this other fact that their labor brought them a palpable return. They were valuable property. It was distinctly to the interest of their owners that they should be well cared for. And the circumstance that their wages were paid not in money, but in kind, — furthermore that their wages were not a matter of contract on their own part, — did not prevent them from receiving wages, on the whole quite equivalent to any which they could have earned for themselves under a system theoretically free.

At the time of the Revolution slavery existed throughout the colonies. Throughout the colonies, too, it was recognized by philanthropic sentiment as inharmonious with the logic of personal liberty. The subsequent course of economic development in the North chanced to be such as made free labor

more profitable. Before long, accordingly, slavery began to disappear there. It was soon condemned by law. And as the popular sentiment of the North tended to replace the elder conception of local liberty by the more highly generalized conception of liberty as individual, Northerners came to regard slavery as utterly abominable. It deprived human beings of their inalienable right to liberty. Whoever should venture to defend it was a moral monster.

In the South, meanwhile, affairs took a precisely contrary turn. The course of economic development throughout that region made slave labor not only profitable, but essential to the actual constitution of society. The natural result followed. Philanthropical sentiment tended to give way to the logic of experience; and slavery, instead of being held regrettable, came to be regarded as

an institution sanctioned by divine law. At the same time, as we have seen, the old conception of local liberty, as inherent in the separate States, lingered unchanged in Southern minds. Each state government, the South grew to believe, with all the confirmed fervor of habit, needed only to show that those whom it governed freely gave their consent to it; then it had a sovereign right to conduct its own affairs as it might choose. And any interference with the free conduct of its internal affairs, even though the meddlers might be fellow-citizens of the United States of America, seemed a monstrous violation of its prime and inalienable right of local liberty. Such violation, of course, was as criminal in Southern eyes as slavery had come to be in the eyes of the North.

Though it is obviously impossible completely to simplify a historic con-

flict to such degree as this, such simplification of the conflict between Northern ideals and Southern as I have here attempted should illuminate that aspect of our Civil War which is most inspiring. Whatever else that war was, it was a true conflict of honestly cherished ideals. Each side fervently believed the other disloyal to the pristine ideal of liberty, which our nation was ancestrally bound to defend. To the North, the Southern States — by the very fact that their economic system was based on slavery — seemed wickedly to deny that inalienable right to personal liberty which the Declaration of Independence had asserted as the common possession of all mankind. To the South, the Northern States — who displayed increasing disposition to interfere with local institutions beyond their own borders — seemed with equal wickedness to

violate that principle of the Declaration of Independence which had asserted the right of the American colonies to persist thenceforth as free and independent States. From this point of view, I think, we can all see best why the tragic memory of our Civil War is so superbly heroic; for that war was an honest, irrepressible conflict between two insensibly modified but equally logical versions of our pristine ideal of liberty. In the North this ideal had come to seem primarily individual; in the South this ideal had remained primarily local. And no less final test than that of mortal conflict could ever have settled the fatal dispute.

In spite of all this tragic divergence, there is one phase of the ideal of liberty, as cherished throughout America, from which our people have never swerved. Whether, like characteristic Northern-

ers, Americans have been apt to assume that true liberty is primarily the liberty of the individual, or whether, like characteristic Southerners before the war, they have been more apt to regard liberty as primarily local, America has never confused its ideal of liberty with that of license. It is by no mere accident that at this moment the vagaries of theoretical anarchy are as honestly detested among ourselves as they are by any sovereign, temporal or spiritual, in Europe. Our laws which forbid the landing of anarchists on our shores may be, and probably are, not particularly practicable. If it comes to logic, one may doubtless find them hard to reconcile with those principles of individual liberty and freedom of conscience which, at least throughout the North, we are fond of proclaiming. At the same time there can be no doubt that these laws

express public sentiment; that they commend themselves to the instinctive convictions of native Americans; and that opposition to them, however sincere and devoted, stirs our contemptuous wrath. In point of fact, I am told, anarchists are not necessarily unwashed and beery beings; but we of America are at present unable to associate any other images with the name of anarchy. The word "liberty," on the other hand, perhaps similar in its connotation for many European minds, has never yet suggested to us anything of the kind.

On the contrary, the individual figure in whom the American ideal of Liberty is popularly embodied has beautiful dignity. That ideal, as we have already seen, was the animating ideal of the American Revolution, — the national ideal which throughout that conflict was most uncompromisingly asserted. And

as the American Revolution passes into the perspective of history and of tradition, it has symbolized itself more and more in the figure of one great man. Almost from his own time, American sentiment has consented to find the ideal of our independent nationality incarnate in our first and greatest national hero. The very chance that the father of our country was childless — that his blood does not flow in living veins, to remind us that some are nearer to him than the rest, — perhaps makes us love his memory the more. But the marvel of it is not the mere fact of this reverence; it is the fact that it proves justified. Throughout human history there is no national hero more impregnably heroic than Washington. You will find heroes elsewhere who rise noble in the traditional vista of the centuries. Elsewhere, too, you will find heroes revealed

noble in the records from which painful study can reconstruct their stories. But you shall search far and vainly for another whose justification is so complete as his, ever greater in perspective, and just as great when you study the actual circumstances of his daily doings.

By a singularly happy chance he has never been more tenderly characterized than by a poet-laureate of England, who could almost remember that Revolutionary War which parted the ways of the mother country and of ours. Southey's "Vision of Judgment" has been obscured by the brilliant parody of it which Byron published two years later; and Byron, of course, was a greater and more popular poet than Southey. But Southey's "Vision of Judgment" is just what Byron's is not; it is noble. Witness these lines in which it tells how the absolving spirit

of Washington met the fearlessly candid spirit of King George before the bar of Almighty Justice:

"One alone remained, when the rest had retired
to their station;
Silently he had stood, and still unmoved and in
silence,
With a steady mien, regarded the face of the
Monarch.
Thoughtful awhile he gazed; severe, but serene,
was his aspect;
Calm, but stern; like one whom no compassion
could weaken,
Neither could doubt deter, nor violent impulses
alter;
Lord of his own resolves, — of his own heart
absolute master.
Awful spirit; his place was with ancient sages
and heroes:
Fabius, Aristides, and Solon and Epaminondas."

Whatever else Washington symbolizes, he symbolizes that aspect of the American Revolution on which we dwelt together, a little while ago, —

the aspect which distinguishes it, as essentially conservative, from the radical revolutions of subsequent history. He is the popular hero of our Revolution; he is the figure in whom our pristine ideal of liberty seems most surely incarnate. And there is no aspect of him in which you can for a moment feel that his character shows itself violent or destructive.

Not very long ago I was touching on this matter in France. There, of course, the first illustration of these generalizations which occurred to me concerned Washington's dealings with the French government. And this illustration proves as characteristic as any other which we might consider. The episode I have in mind is so familiar that we are perhaps apt to forget how well it illustrates the difference between the ideal of Liberty as cher-

ished by revolutionary America and the same nominal ideal cherished by revolutionary Europe.

When the French Revolution broke out, Washington was President of the United States. The revolutionary government of France sent as its minister to America one Edmond Genet; who, like many other gentlemen converted to principles not generally cherished by Frenchmen of their class, was an extreme advocate of those general doctrines concerning the rights of man so enthusiastically professed by the new French republic. By that time the republican sentiment of the United States was already vigorous. As the representative of a sister republic, Genet was received in America with unprecedented popular enthusiasm.

The French republic was then in trouble with the surrounding monarch-

ies, whose principles were obviously hostile to its own. Genet was encouraged by his popular reception to expect from the American republic material assistance in the wars which his own republic was waging against its neighbors. But in spite of all his popular support, he found himself confronted by the calm figure of Washington. Though Washington never swerved in his friendliness to France, he never swerved, either, from his conviction that the prosperity of our own country depended on jealous preservation of its local liberty. A happy chance had separated the America of his time, by the width of an Atlantic still unbridged by electricity or steam, from all other civilized nations. The chief duty of this America, he held, was to assert and to maintain the independence of our own government, to preserve and to strengthen the liberties

which that government had been established by popular consent to maintain. One means of preserving and strengthening those liberties was obviously to keep ourselves free from all entangling alliances, even though such an alliance might be with a sister republic at war with alien monarchies. Republic and monarchies alike were European; this very fact meant that their politics were essentially foreign to the politics of America. And the treasure of our American independence, he believed, could be preserved only by avoiding every danger of complication with difficulties foreign to ourselves, however much the matters in dispute might enlist our personal sympathies.

When Genet found himself thus at odds with the chief magistrate of a people more than outspoken in their personal sympathy, he proceeded to

conduct himself in a manner which, however agreeable to the popular sentiment of the moment, openly slighted the authority of the government to which he was accredited. He ventured, for one thing, to issue commissions, authorizing privateers to prey on the commerce of England. He threatened an appeal to the American people against their regularly constituted authorities. And for the moment a good many Americans seemed disposed to respond to his appeal. Washington, however, took the situation with characteristic firmness. In a punctiliously regular way he proceeded to declare that Genet as French minister to the United States was what is technically called in diplomacy *persona non grata*,—individually unwelcome. The government of France accepted the situation. Genet was superseded by a gentleman of less

anarchistic tendency; and the somewhat humorous end of the whole business was that this extremely obtrusive French republican came to the conclusion that his person would be safest in a republic conducted on more orderly principles than those which for the moment swayed his own republic of France. So he quietly settled himself down in the State of New York; and there he lived peacefully till he died, some years later, in a condition of security assured by the established government which for a little while he had done his best to upset.

At the moment of this dispute Washington's action was far from commanding general popular approval. It is possible, indeed, that something like a majority of American citizens — already superstitiously devoted to the word "republic" — sympathized far more ar-

dently with Genet's vagrant principles than with the orderly policy of their own president. The sober second thought of America, on the other hand, has found Washington's conduct characteristically American, and Genet's distinctly the reverse. Genet's ideal of Liberty may have been profoundly honest, it may have been magnificently generous, and it may remain deeply inspiring, if you will; but considered from our present point of view, it proves on scrutiny not American, but French — as French as his name was or as his manners were. Washington's ideal of Liberty, on the other hand, proves American to the core. The American people had given its consent to a government of which the chief duty was to preserve its rights and its constitutional system. If those rights, of which the dearest at that moment was the right to liberty from for-

eign interference, were to be effectually preserved, that government, once in authority, must be sustained and respected. It must be as sovereign as any sovereignty which it replaced; and the manner in which Washington then asserted and maintained our sovereign conception of liberty has come to be acknowledged as profoundly national.

In telling this story I unthinkingly used the phrase, "entangling alliances." The words occur in that wonderful political testament known as Washington's Farewell Address. This document is said to have been mostly written by Alexander Hamilton; but it was issued in Washington's name, and whatever was authoritatively issued in the name of Washington represented what Washington believed. In that Farewell Address, accordingly, we may find his most thoughtful assertion of the Ameri-

can ideal of Liberty. The address assumes this ideal so earnestly that you cannot help absorbing its spirit. It specifically asserts the permanence of our local independence from foreign intervention. It asserts so much of personal liberty as is involved in the equal rights of individuals before the law. It maintains the privilege of all citizens to register from time to time their consent to the government under which they live. And it recognizes with prophetic foresight the conflict, sure to arise before long, concerning what the unit of local liberty in America should be.

III

UNION

In the national temper of America, we have found, the deepest characteristic is idealism kept within the bounds of order. This temper has nowhere shown itself more distinctly American than in its political ideals. The first of these, the ideal of Liberty, bears a name which during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was enthusiastically proclaimed in Europe. In America, nevertheless, it had a peculiar character: the chief right it involved was the right of our own government to derive its just powers from the consent of the governed, and to conduct its affairs for itself, with no external interference.

Yet at first, as we have seen, there was no general consent in America as to just what the unit of our local liberty ought to be. And the historical fact that in Revolutionary days the government of the United States was new, while the governments of the separate States had existed from times long before living memory, tended to make the governments of the separate States far more evident than the central government in which they had consented to join.

So much we have seen. We have traced, too, the manner in which social and economic changes came to modify this original state of feeling. In the North, where these changes were radical, they insensibly weakened the elder ideal of independent State sovereignty, and substituted for it an increasing devotion to the United States as the unit

of American liberty. Wherever this process went on, the name of Liberty began to generalize itself, and to signify more the notion of individual liberty than that of local. In the South, meanwhile, a less radical social and economic change left the elder American ideal of local liberty far less modified. The great Civil War of the nineteenth century may best be understood as an honest conflict between these divergent phases of our pristine national ideal.

Now that the Civil War is more than forty years past, we can begin to see that the Northern States imposed their own reading of the Constitution upon the Southern States by sheer force of arms. This sounds like tyranny. Beyond all dispute, however, the North did not so regard it. What makes the memory of the Civil War a priceless

national heritage is not that one side or the other was right or victorious; it is that on each side the nobler animating spirit was complete devotion to what each believed to be the truth.

And yet when the war was waging, few Americans on either side could conceive it as we can thus happily conceive it to-day. Whoever reads the records of those doubtful times, — still more, whoever can remember, even with the distortions of only youthful impression, something of their actual poignancy, — must be aware that each side passionately believed the other to be traitorous. Throughout the North, the Southern States who endeavored to secede from the Union were denounced as intentionally disloyal; the very name of Rebels — the only term by which Northerners were apt to characterize Confederate sympathizers — implies this fact. It

was seared so deep in Northern conviction that traces of it may perhaps linger there for more generations to come than have yet elapsed since the bombardment of Fort Sumter. We of the North, meanwhile, have never let ourselves quite understand the reverse of this state of feeling. During those crucial years the policy of the Federal Government impressed the Southern States just as secession impressed the Northern. To the South, coercion seemed as deliberately traitorous to American tradition as ever rebellion seemed to us of the North. Each side bitterly believed the other unworthy of our common ancestry. The most tragic phase of a true and noble conflict of ideals is that in the heat of its passion neither side can perceive the other to be as devotedly honest as itself.

Though our consideration of the

ideal of Liberty may have helped us far towards perceiving the manner in which this deep emotional misunderstanding among fellow-countrymen arose, we have hardly touched on the most stirring phase of it in the North. While our pristine ideal of local Liberty had remained dominant in the South, its place, as the chief of our national ideals had been assumed in the North by another national ideal, the ideal of Union. During that critical period, this newer ideal surged to the front both of Northern consciousness and of Northern speech. Everywhere throughout the North, devotion to the ideal of Union was assumed to be the paramount test of loyalty. To understand the temperamental history of our country, we must, accordingly, trace the origin of this ideal and its growth.

Even more than our American ideal

of Liberty, our American ideal of Union is peculiar to ourselves. It is not easy to define; but one or two things about it seem clear. It assumes as axiomatic that, for better or worse, all citizens of the United States are and must forever remain fellow-countrymen. Any questioning of this truth it holds to be deliberately mischievous. This conception resembles the orthodox conception of marriage in minds controlled by church tradition. Like any marriage, the political union of the United States of America has had a distinct historical beginning. And this beginning, so far as the external forms of it went, might have meant no more than marriage is sometimes carelessly called, an alliance or a partnership. As we all know, however, the fact that marriage is sometimes thus described has not prevented the partnership of marriage from being

regarded as unique. The parties are free to enter into it or not as they please; but once having entered into it they are committed for life to the course they have chosen. And throughout the regions which are affected by Christian civilization, this alliance or partnership of marriage has been devoutly believed to be of divine institution, sanctioned in a manner which transcends the passing and trivial conditions of earth. Few marriages throughout recorded time have been flawlessly happy. Domestic life has always involved a considerable degree of domestic discord. But except among a few advanced and erratic people, so infrequent that one may fairly neglect them, the inevitable discord of domesticity has never seemed good ground for unlimited divorce. Whatever statistics may tell us, even the public opinion of decent America still

generally regards marriage reverently. Now some similar conception has tended, at least in the North, to sanction and to sanctify our national ideal of Union. The separate States of America entered together into a compact. Their interests have sometimes diverged, their conduct has sometimes been worse than displeasing to one another; but for better or worse, ardent Union principle has come to hold, the bond which binds these States together is indissoluble. To tolerate, even in speculative thought, the notion that any one of them may at will withdraw from its alliance with the rest seems to Union men as monstrous as to tolerate the contention that a dissatisfied husband or wife may rightly roam at will, bringing a marriage to an end as if it were no more than a commercial partnership. In joining the Union, each State willingly and per-

manently surrendered a part of its freedom. It consented, much as a husband or a wife consents in wedlock, to be considered thenceforth not alone, but as a part of the central alliance to which it pledged its troth.

To contemporary Northern minds this statement of our national ideal of Union may well appear trite. Yet we have only to remind ourselves of an incident at which we have already glanced, to see how strange this conception was to native American minds at the beginning of the American Revolution. You will remember how in January, 1776, when Washington first hoisted the Union flag at Cambridge, he hoisted it, according to his own words, not in deference to any ideally sacred Union, but only "in compliment to the United Colonies." You will remember as well how the Boston loyal-

ists, Americans as native as he, totally misunderstood his purpose; how they saw in the Union emblem floating above the insurgent lines at Cambridge, only an intimation that the eloquence of King George the Third had persuaded his momentarily rebellious subjects to reunite themselves with the British Empire. At a moment when such fancies as these could be excited in native American minds by a flag which symbolized American Union,— and the moment was half-way between the Battle of Lexington and the Declaration of Independence,—the ideal of American Union could have possessed no such reverend quality, no such sacred and stirring power, as some of us now imagine to have been inherent in it always. To understand its character, we can see already, our wisest course is to trace its growth.

The simplest way of so doing is to glance at some familiar phrases in which the state papers of our early history set it forth. The first of these state papers is the Declaration of Independence; which, as we have already reminded ourselves, marks the conscious origin of our nation, as distinguished from the origin of our national temper. At best, we can hardly fail to admit, that paper is ambiguous as to whether there instantly arose any central national power, to assume the common sovereignty of England over the colonies which declared themselves free and independent States. On the long and eloquent preliminary passages we have already touched enough. The actual Declaration is compact; and the opening clause of it, which describes the officials who held themselves authorized to declare our independence of English sovereignty,

is worth thoughtful attention: "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled."

To Union sentiment, nowadays, of course, "The United States of America" is a term which seems to assert our almost divinely sanctioned national unity; but taken by itself, as it was written in that same year, 1776, when Washington had first hoisted the Union flag at Cambridge, it involves, so far as I can see, no necessary suggestion of anything more than a temporary alliance. Suppose, for example, that England, France, Germany, Italy, and other powers should enter into a formal alliance against other than European portions of the world. Suppose that their plenipotentiaries should sign a declaration of which the first phrase should be, "We the Representatives of the

United States of Europe, in General Congress assembled." Some such alliance as this might conceivably occur at almost any time, to defend Europe from the awakening strength of Asia, or to protect the States of Europe from submergence in socialistic revolution. But no such alliance would impair the independent national existence of any of its signatories. This truth would be evident, indeed, as a matter of grammatical punctilio: the "United States of Europe," would everywhere be used as a plural noun. So were the "United States of America" in the Declaration of Independence. Here is the full clause in which our national independence was declared: "We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, . . . Do, in the Name and by the Authority of the good People of

these colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; . . . and that, as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do."

In these words of the Declaration, as one ponders upon them, there seems no suggestion that the free and independent States of America did not claim separate and entire sovereign rights, each for itself. There seems nothing, for example, which should even imply denial of their right to levy war against each other, or of their right to contract alliances with each other, or to establish commerce among themselves. They did not declare themselves a free and

independent nation; they scrupulously declared themselves to be free and independent States.

As a matter of fact, however, they could maintain their freedom and independence only by common action against English sovereignty, which they had joined together to renounce. No one of them was strong enough to oppose British power without the help of the rest; and had it not been for the great extent of territory which they controlled among them, their united strength might hardly have been sufficient, even in their transatlantic remoteness, to oppose for any length of time the concentrated force of the British Empire. In order to maintain with any shadow of hope the principles which the Declaration of Independence asserted, they were compelled to unite themselves for the while as firmly as

possible. Two years after the Declaration of Independence, accordingly, the thirteen States of America entered into a formal bond or compact of union.

Traditional Union sentiment firmly believes that these Articles of Confederation meant to reassert the unity of our country. Taken by themselves, however, their terms read almost exactly like those of any regular treaty or alliance between legally independent States. The very word "confederation," which is employed to describe the nature of the bond in question, might equally well describe such a compact between the United States of Europe as we have just been fancifully considering. The Articles of Confederation, in fact, might reasonably be supposed, so far as their phrase goes, to be only one of those alliances which the free and independent States of America had de-

clared themselves to have full power to contract. And the first two of the Articles of Confederation imply a jealous preservation of State sovereignty, not quite consonant with the conviction of our later ideal of Union, which assumes that the union of the American States had, from the beginning, a sanctity analogous to that of marriage. Here they are: —

"Art. 1. The style of this confederacy shall be 'The United States of America.'

"Art. 2. Each State retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this confederation especially delegated to the United States in congress assembled."

That second of the Articles of Confederation, adopted in 1778, expresses

the principle of State sovereignty with almost final decisiveness. So far as one may judge from internal evidence the men who signed the Articles of Confederation, regarded the "United States of America," as little more than a descriptive term. Certainly they did not use it in a way which should suggest that it possessed, in their minds, any deep emotional vitality or power. On the other hand, they stated the principle that each State is independently sovereign, not only with compact precision, but in terms which might well imply that each State cherished the ideal of its local liberty with intense affection.

As everybody knows, these Articles of Confederation were the instrument under which the American Revolution was brought to its successful issue. They enabled us among other things to

negotiate the treaty by which England finally acknowledged American independence. As a practical instrument of alliance under which the American States might levy war in common, they proved fairly efficient. The moment that the war was over, however, and that American politics became more constructive in purpose, the Articles of Confederation proved far from satisfactory. The state of affairs in America for the few years which followed the Revolutionary War seemed portentously confused. So far as popular opinion went the powers enjoyed by governments of the separate States seemed clearly enough defined. Those enjoyed by the central power, on the other hand, were shadowy. Though the central government undoubtedly existed, it had hardly any authority to enforce its decrees; it amounted to little more than an

advisory council for the governments of the different States. As the years passed, one fact became evident: if the United States of America were ever to be more than a collocation of discordant, petty powers, they must enter into some more definite and stronger compact. In brief, just as the Declaration of Independence had demanded as a supplement the Articles of Confederation, so the Articles of Confederation demanded another supplement of similar tendency, if the United States of America were to endure. The result of this need was the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States.

To modern Americans, this Constitution seems a reverend document, immortally wise, which proceeded from the consenting wisdom of a divinely inspired group of sages. Many good Americans

hardly hesitate to class it with the Decalogue. In point of fact it was nothing of this superhuman kind; it was the result of long, deliberate, thoughtful, and on the whole wise discussion of the situation, — a situation which everybody agreed to be hardly tenable. On the other hand the views as to what should be done were various. Almost every member of the constitutional convention appears to have had some project of his own. The result was inevitably a compromise, — a compromise which completely satisfied nobody, but which came as near as possible to reconciling these wide divergences. The precise object of the Constitution was to define and to strengthen that central or national power of the United States which everybody could see to be essential to American prosperity; at the same time the Constitution must obvi-

ously protect the sovereignty of the separate States, — both those already in existence and those which were subsequently to be created. One conviction seems accordingly to have been pretty clearly defined in everybody's mind at that time. The central government, the government of the Union, ought to acquire no needless degree of sovereignty. Our national existence, however, — the existence of America as distinguished from the existence of those separate States which unite to make us Americans, — was certainly coming to the fore. And when we compare the opening words of the Constitution with the state papers at which we have previously glanced, we can hardly help feeling in them a strong tendency toward the conception of a united American people. Here is the preamble :

"We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America."

Taken by themselves the first words of that preamble, "We, the people of the United States," might seem to imply the conception of undivided nationality. And yet we have only to remember the circumstances under which the Constitution went into operation, to be reminded that no such conception could yet be counted on as a stirring motive. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention came not from the people of the United States in common, but

from the peoples or the governments of the separate States. When those delegates signed the Constitution, they signed it not as individuals, but as delegates of the sovereign States which they represented ; and their signatures to the Constitution in no way put the instrument into immediate operation. Before it could become operative it had to be sanctioned by the separate States, much as a treaty must usually be sanctioned or ratified by the powers whose so-called plenipotentiaries have negotiated it. And even though delegates from a given State had signed the Constitution, their signatures meant only that the Constitution might become operative in that State in case the State should formally accede to it, or adopt it. Phrase the matter as you may, you cannot help perceiving that, when first signed, the Constitution was hardly more

than an unratified treaty. Everybody understood, too, that it could not go into operation anywhere until a considerable majority of the thirteen States had acceded to it. In other words, even after the Constitution had been drawn up, as we have it to-day, it did not become a living instrument of government until the greater part of the separate units of local liberty, ancestral to American tradition, had definitely and formally agreed to surrender some of their independent rights to the government which was thenceforth to wield them, to defend them, and to assert them for the common good.

In view of this fact, one circumstance in our subsequent history, frequently misunderstood, becomes deeply significant. To this day a citizen of the United States travelling in any foreign country is sometimes thought presump-

tuous when he calls himself an American. The term "American," foreigners are apt to observe, ought properly to apply to Brazilians, to Canadians, to Mexicans, to Chilians, as well as to citizens of the United States. For what reason, we are sometimes asked, have we taken upon ourselves the name of a hemisphere? The reason is to be found in the circumstances under which the Constitution of the United States was adopted. That Constitution gives the central government no name whatever. The government and the nation which it creates, indeed, are unique in history in the fact that they have always been nameless. And this was no accident. If at the time when the Constitution was signed, and was sent forth for adoption, any one had suggested an independent name for the central government, that mere suggestion would probably

have prevented its acceptance everywhere. In each of the thirteen States there was sensitive emotional loyalty to the old established local government. A man was glad to call himself a citizen of Massachusetts, of New York, or of Virginia. He was doubly proud of his citizenship in his State for the reason that, in view of the stirring phrases of the Declaration of Independence, it plainly implied that he was no longer a British subject. But each of the thirteen States was equally sovereign. Had anybody proposed that the name of any one of them or of any group of them should be given to the Union, — that the whole country, for example, should be called Virginia or New England, — the inhabitants of the rest would evidently have been stirred to resentful wrath. In such event, the Constitution would have had small mercy at

their hands. And at that moment the suggestion of any new common name might have proved almost equally repugnant to the general American temper. In impulse, every American of 1787 loved his own State too well to tolerate any evident neglect of its sovereign dignity. Our unique national namelessness, accordingly, proves to be a most vivid indication of what our Union was in the beginning. We were in no degree presumptuous when we began to call ourselves "Americans"; we only admitted, with inevitable candor, the actual circumstances under which our government originated. The United States of America was still a term analogous to that which we have already fancied more than once — the United States of Europe. It did not allude to outlying portions of our western continent; it meant only that the

States which united in the Constitution were all situated in America.

The Constitution trembled in the balance for months. During those months appeared that remarkable series of political essays, the *Federalist*, in which honest and able political pamphleteers, of whom the most powerful was Alexander Hamilton, endeavored to excite interest in the Constitution by making clear both its vital importance at the moment and its significance for the future of our country. Throughout the thirteen States, all at first doubtful, the *Federalist* strove to make men feel that we could secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity only by strengthening the United States of America into a more perfect union. In every line of the *Federalist*, accordingly, the ideal of Union is at least implicit. That ideal was soon to assume,

in many parts of America, a character as sacred as that already enjoyed by the ideal of Liberty. And yet as one turns the pages of the *Federalist*, one feels that although this ideal of Union shows itself already vital, its vitality is distinctly different from that which animates it now. Before the Constitution was finally adopted, Union was inevitably an ideal not of the present, but of the future. It could not then be asserted, like the ideal of Liberty, as something already treasured, — as an inalienable right which we ardently enjoyed, which we were prepared heroically to maintain and defend. It could be asserted only as something to anticipate, as something to strive for, as something which should by and by awaken us to a future more truly national than the past had been or than the present could yet feel itself.

Together with other forces then at work, the *Federalist* brought about the result for which no American can ever fail in thankfulness, — that is, the adoption of the Constitution and the firm establishment of the national government under which we still live and grow. In due time that Constitution went into operation, under the presidency of our first and greatest national hero, Washington. In the perspective of the years this first of our presidents seems as securely seated a magistrate as any of those who in due course have succeeded him. Yet when we stop to think, nothing is really clearer than that Washington's accession to the presidency was not, like that of his later successors, an assured fact, — one more step in the progress of our lengthening national history. It could not have been anything else than a momentous

political experiment. The Constitution which his presidency first put into active operation was untested. Furthermore, it was in its very nature a compromise between opposing views; and, like any such compromise, it completely satisfied nobody. Whether it possessed vitality enough to persist even for a little while, was a question which only time could answer. To Washington, and to many among the statesmen who surrounded him, this question was terribly anxious. It underlay one of his few attempts to direct our government into channels which have proved beyond the range of practical politics. He foresaw from the beginning the dangers inherent in political parties. He did not foresee with equal clearness the somewhat less obvious benefits of party system. He did his best to prevent the formation of permanent and discordant factions

among our American citizens; he attempted to govern with a non-partisan cabinet, in which various opinions concerning our national policy should be equally represented.

When the Constitution went into operation, two widely divergent views of it were already held with equal honesty and with almost equal cogency. Everybody was agreed that the Constitution of the United States derived its authority from the consent of the sovereign States. Everybody was agreed that the letter of that Constitution specifically vested in the central government certain definite powers. Now in order to exercise those powers the central government must evidently perform a number of specific official acts. Clearly enough, some of those acts might easily give rise to the question of whether they were warranted by the

letter of the Constitution. If not, one party maintained, such acts were impracticable; for the letter of the Constitution resembled the letter of the elder Articles of Confederation, which had specifically reserved for the separate States every vestige of sovereignty which they had not expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled. In other words, the party which was disposed to a strict construction of the Constitution was alertly jealous of any usurpation of sovereignty by the central government, and was eager for the maintenance of the highest possible degree of sovereignty in each of the separate States. At least in tradition, the head of this party is held to have been Thomas Jefferson.

In opposition to this view a totally contradictory one was maintained by the party of loose constructionists, of

whom the leader was Alexander Hamilton, the chief author of the *Federalist*. Their view of the Constitution seems on the whole to have been as follows. By the fact that the States adopted the Constitution, they evidently conferred on the government of the United States certain definite powers. By the letter of the Constitution, the government of the United States has sovereign right to do certain specific things. Now if a government has a right to do anything, it obviously has a right to take all measures needful for this purpose. In surrendering to the central government certain clearly defined phases of sovereignty, the loose constructionists accordingly held, the separate States implicitly conferred on the government whatever powers might prove necessary to make those phases of sovereignty effectual. The strict constructionists were dis-

posed to maintain, with academic logic, that whenever a Constitutional question arose, the letter of the Constitution must be held authoritative, according to the rules which interpret legal phraseology in general. The loose constructionists, on the other hand, — Federalists, as they came to be called in party politics, — maintained, with hard sense, rather than with logical precision, that the Constitution must be construed freely enough to maintain the central government in full efficiency. The difference between these two views may be compared to the difference between that view of old English rights maintained by the courts of common law, and that maintained by the courts of equity. In many respects the strict constructionists were more logical than their opponents; but if their logic had been suffered to prevail, the system to which

it was applied would have come to grief.

Washington's effort to reconcile these incompatible principles in a single cabinet proved Utopian. As a matter of fact the central government was essential to the preservation of American nationality; and from the moment when it came into existence that central government began to display the vitality which at the end of a century and a quarter has resulted in our unsought imperial problems. Its development would have been impossible unless from the beginning it had inclined toward the view of the loose constructionists, insisting for itself on whatever power it needed to maintain its authority. This growing Federalist tendency of the national government alarmed the strict constructionists. Feeling ran high. And in view of this swift growth of

partisan animosity there are few things in our national literature more solemn than the manner in which the Farewell Address of Washington urges upon all citizens of the United States the importance of the ideal of which we are trying to trace the growth together, the ideal of Union.

To this ideal a very considerable part of the Farewell Address is specifically devoted. At the moment when he took leave of the people whom he had led and guided, from the time when they first asserted their independence of foreign sovereignty to the time when they were already far on the road towards an empire of their own, he felt above all things else the need of setting before them the full significance of that national sentiment which was even then beginning to unite them. The ideal of our Union has never been advocated

more impressively, more gravely, or in a manner which more nearly approaches classical dignity. And yet there is something deeply significant in the fact that when we consider the Farewell Address, we think of Washington only as advocating the ideal which he urges. American liberty he treats as something already assured and understood; its very name may be trusted to arouse popular emotion. The ideal of Union, on the other hand, though in his view it seems equally fundamental, he treats as the subject of portentous reasoning. It has not yet emotional vitality. If it have life at all, that life is still embryonic. And yet if it have not life, that grave address of Washington's assures us, our liberty and our nationality can hardly long endure.

The president who succeeded Washington was frankly partisan; John

Adams was a Federalist, with an avowed centralizing policy. His adminstration provoked reaction. The third president of the United States was Thomas Jefferson, who, as we have seen, was the leader of the strict constructionists. He had always looked with suspicion on any undue strengthening of the central national power. Accordingly his accession to the presidency seemed likely to check the progress of centralization. It did not do so. Without going into detail, we may remind ourselves of one of the chief acts now connected with his official memory. During his administration, a great portion of the American continent, to the southwest and the west of the territory then under the sovereignty of the United States, had come into the possession of France. This French colonial possession, generally described by the name of Louisiana,

included not only the State which now bears that name, but also an indefinite range of country so extensive as to be very like what we later called "the great West." The period was that of the Napoleonic wars, and the Napoleonic wars made it inconvenient for France to maintain her sovereignty over remote and unsettled American territory. France therefore desired to get rid of Louisiana. The simplest way of doing so was to sell it to its nearest neighbor, the United States. So the bargain was somehow proposed to the American government.

Now it was already clear to any enlightened statesman that the United States were bound to grow. Our population must expand. The only direction in which it could expand was to the westward. If our population should expand far westward, however, it must

soon find itself on the Louisiana frontier. The question of when we should need that territory was only a question of time. Jefferson was not only the chief of strict constructionists, he was also an enlightened statesman. It was clear that the letter of the Constitution of the United States contained no authority whatever to purchase territory in the name of the central government. Yet for a comparatively small expenditure the nation was offered an opportuntunity peaceably to acquire territory essential to our national development and welfare. The logic of the situation prevailed over the logic of the law. He bought Louisiana. To that bold act of wise statesmanship we owe the continental Union without which our modern development would have been impossible. Yet this far-sighted act of the leader of strict constructionists strength-

ened the authority of the central government to a degree beyond anything which had been dreamed of by Washington or Adams or any Federalist of them all. To the end, Jefferson theoretically opposed a strongly centralized national power; but once in charge of national affairs, he found what has proved true: — either the central government must be inefficient, or else when confronted with questions of national policy it must assert its dominance.

At the time of the purchase of Louisiana our actual government, under the present Constitution, was only fourteen years old. This obviously means that every mature human being in the United States could remember times before that government had yet come into existence. Much as it had strengthened its hold on public sentiment, accordingly, it must still have seemed in some degree experi-

mental. The same fact was true four years later, when in order to avoid entangling complications in European warfare, the national government passed that act of embargo which virtually ruined the commerce of New England. On the whole, the politics of New England had been Federalist from the beginning; what is more, the temper of New England has always been favorably disposed to the ideal of Union. Yet this policy which impaired the prosperity of New England came uncommonly near to provoking acts of what would later have been called secession. Indignant as New England became, however, it did not actually proceed to this length. Had it done so, it would have done something superficially like what the Southern States did in 1861. Fundamentally, however, it would have done something far less disturbing. At any

time before 1815, — the year when the War of 1812 came to an end, — the secession of an American State would have meant only reversion to a state of affairs which everybody in the prime of life could vividly remember. By 1861 secession had come to mean reversion to a state of things which had long passed out of living memory. It had become a palpable breach of what had grown to be an immemorial national tradition.

The growth of this tradition is pleasantly symbolized by a quaint legend, long current in New England. It is probably no more true than Mr. Weems's persistent anecdote of George Washington and his hatchet; but it has deep national significance. It concerns the childhood of Daniel Webster. Webster was the son of a New Hampshire farmer; and very likely when he was a boy he sometimes followed his father's plough.

As the story goes, somebody gave him a cotton handkerchief, on which was printed the Constitution of the United States; and the infant sage, plodding through the furrows, would expound the Constitution with some such inspired precocity as animated the dispute with the doctors in the Temple. Like so many legends this tale implies truth. Webster was born, of course, before the Constitution was signed; but at the time when it came into operation he was only seven years old. Throughout his conscious life, accordingly, that instrument, of which he became an orthodox interpreter, was in actual existence. To himself he was from the beginning a citizen not of revolutionary America, but of our duly constituted United States. He belonged, in brief, to the first generation of Americans whose memories, like our own, embraced no other form

of government than that under which we live; and thus his career embodies in its earliest form the full type of character which we now call American. This type of character has forgotten how the Constitution originated in a compromise between wrangling disputers; it remembers only how beneficent the Constitution has proved; and it finds in the Constitution both the origin and the sanction of our profoundly national ideal of Union, — an ideal which in Washington's time and in the days of the Federalists had been not a fact, but only an aspiration.

The genesis of that ideal we have now traced. It was perhaps implied in the terms by which the United States declared themselves free and independent. It was somewhat more clearly defined in the mutual alliance into which these States entered in the Articles of

Confederation, jealously though that instrument guarded the independent sovereignty of each separate State. It was nearly, if not quite, asserted in the preamble of the Constitution ten years later. Yet we have only to ponder on the arguments of the *Federalist*, and on Washington's Farewell Address to realize that, even when the nineteenth century was at hand, the ideal of Union did not yet possess such popular vitality as to make it irresistibly appeal to emotion. It was still within the region of political debate. History took its inevitable course. The central government was compelled by the very law of its growth to assume strengthening authority. Still, even so late as the War of 1812, oppressive assertion of the central power excited what would later have been called disloyal sentiment in the Federalist stronghold of New England. Webster

himself, I believe, had considerable sympathy with this transitory state of feeling.

Less than twenty years later, things had changed. If we were to seek everywhere for a thrillingly emotional appeal to the ideal of Union, we should find it nowhere more enduring than in Webster's reply to Hayne, delivered in the United States Senate in 1830. The nature of his argument need not concern us now; it is remembered only by students of constitutional law. The deathless portion of his speech is the peroration. In those final words Webster sets forth the national ideal of Union not as an aspiration, not as something for which the future may hope, but as something which true Americans may be trusted to recognize as so priceless a national treasure that the very mention of its name is a passionate appeal to patriotism. Here is what he said:

"I have not allowed myself, sir, to look beyond the Union, to see what might lie hidden in the dark recess behind. I have not coolly weighed the chances of preserving liberty when the bonds that unite us together shall be broken asunder. I have not accustomed myself to hang over the precipice of disunion, to see whether, with my short sight, I can fathom the depth of the abyss below; nor could I regard him as a safe counsellor in the affairs of this government, whose thoughts should be mainly bent on considering, not how the Union may be best preserved, but how tolerable might be the condition of the people when it should be broken up and destroyed. While the Union lasts, we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate

the veil. God grant that in my day, at least, that curtain may not rise! God grant that on my vision never may be opened what lies behind! When my eyes shall be turned to behold for the last time the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union; on States dissevered, discordant, belligerent; on a land rent with civil feuds, or drenched, it may be, in fraternal blood! Let their last feeble and lingering glance rather behold the gorgeous ensign of the republic, now known and honored throughout the earth, still full high advanced, its arms and trophies streaming in their original lustre, not a stripe erased or polluted, nor a single star obscured, bearing for its motto, no such miserable interrogatory as 'What is all this worth?' nor those other words of

delusion and folly, 'Liberty first and Union afterwards;' but everywhere, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea, over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart — Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!"

It has been said that all hortatory eloquence may be reduced to mere appeal to prejudice; and if by "prejudice" we mean the state of mind in which men unthinkingly find themselves, this is true. From the very beginning of our country there has never been a moment when a passionate appeal to the ideal of Liberty would not have been sure of instant response among Americans. Yet it was hardly before the time of this reply to Hayne that appeal to prejudice in favor of Union could have been assured of the

national response which, for all the somewhat breathless elaboration of his old-fashioned rhetoric, Webster's glowing words still awaken. More than anything else in familiar memory, accordingly, that peroration of Webster's marks the time when thousands upon thousands of Americans had come to feel that they were first of all American citizens, and only secondarily citizens of the States where they chanced to dwell.

In the beginning, perhaps, and indeed probably, the ideal of Union had been no more than a legal abstraction. Now, particularly throughout the North, this ideal had grown into some such vitality as that with which popular feeling still sanctions wedlock. The mood which Webster's peroration expresses, the mood to which it appeals, may well be compared to that which, prejudiced or not,

still protects the ideal of marriage against the speculative philosophy of free love.

At the same time such an analogy as this might seriously mislead us. Marriage has been so immemorially cherished as the foundation of civilized society that, throughout recorded history, the eloquence of free-lovers, however fascinating, has been palpably revolutionary. The ideal conception of marriage as sacred has never had the unhappiness of finding itself confronted with an elder historic ideal, at odds with itself, yet just as respectable, and just as ardently cherished. The ideal of Union was less fortunate, at least in the beginning. It was in flat contradiction to another ideal which Americans as fervent as any Unionists had cherished from their cradles with equally honest passion. This was our elder national ideal of local Liberty, upheld in Webster's own time

by his exact contemporary, John Caldwell Calhoun of South Carolina.

In all American history there is no character more pure, no devotion to honestly held political ideals more unswerving than Calhoun's; and a familiar utterance of his toward the close of his life will perhaps indicate his convictions more clearly than any comment on them. "I never use the word 'Nation' in speaking of the United States," he wrote to some political correspondent; "I always use the word 'Union' or 'Confederacy.' We are not a nation, but a *Union*, a confederacy of equal and sovereign rights. England is a nation, Austria is a nation, Russia is a nation, but the United States are not a nation." That last clause implies the crucial difference of opinion. Calhoun honestly maintained until the end that the United States are not a nation. The sentiment

of those Americans to whom Webster's great peroration appealed, — the sentiment which has later come to dominate our united country, — maintains precisely the reverse.

By this time, indeed, the course of our national history has so fully demonstrated the nationality of our Federal union that such a contention as Calhoun's begins to seem harmlessly academic. In his own time, however, before the tragedy of civil war had heroically settled the irrepressible conflict, the regions to which Webster's eloquence instantly appealed were disposed to believe that the elder principles, as maintained by Calhoun, were almost literally diabolical. A trivial anecdote will illustrate what I mean. Not so many years ago I chanced to quote some words which a Massachusetts statesman had reverently uttered as he stood beside Cal-

houn's coffin: "Here was a truly great man, if there ever was one." The friend to whom I mentioned this incident, a lady whose memory ran back to the times of Webster's reply to Hayne, seemed displeased. Calhoun, she replied in effect, may have been a man of great power, but nobody ought to call him truly great; for he was wicked. Naturally supposing that her state of mind resulted from anti-slavery prejudice, I attempted to point out how, to Southerners, the question of slavery had presented itself rather as economic than as moral. I might have spared myself the pains. My good old friend was quite prepared to admit that slavery, however deplorable, was a thing concerning which more than one opinion might conscientiously have been held in Calhoun's time; but nevertheless she persisted in her assertion that Calhoun was wicked. And it presently appeared

that this conviction had been implanted in her gentle mind by an incident of her childhood. When she was a little girl, she told me — and this must have been about 1832 — her father came home one day with a face so grave that she anxiously asked him what was the matter. "A very terrible thing is happening," he said; "that wicked man, Mr. Calhoun, is trying to destroy the Union." The adjective sank deep; its honest use settled the question of Mr. Calhoun's character in one tenacious memory obedient with all the reverence of New England tradition to parental authority.

Though as a matter of history this anecdote is shadowy, there can be little doubt that it accurately represents the feeling excited in New England by the attempt of South Carolina, in 1832, to nullify an act of the central government, which seemed oppressive to the govern-

ment of that State. The question of slavery was probably at the root of this crisis; but among law-abiding Northerners the anti-slavery prejudice which now looms so large in historical perspective was hardly yet awake. What is more, the people concerned in this little domestic anecdote were never of the anti-slavery type; they were rather disposed to dislike abolitionists, as demagogic. The striking fact about the anecdote, accordingly, is the manner in which it indicates how in the New England to which Webster's reply to Hayne has so permanently appealed, there was by 1832 a union sentiment quite distinct from any anti-slavery enthusiasm; and what is more, how this sentiment had waxed so strong that those who cherished the new national ideal of Union, had come to believe their opponents sinful.

Union sentiment, the while, was not

confined to the North, or to people of conservative temper. At that time the President of the United States was Andrew Jackson, a Southerner, and in politics a radical Democrat. The political sentiments of the Northern people who believed nullification wicked were generally far from Democratic; and these people were apt to regard Jackson with some such disfavor as was excited in the same region, a few years ago, by the primeval utterances of Mr. William Jennings Bryan. At the same time, the most ardent Northern Unionist could hardly have wished a president to conduct himself, in this crisis, otherwise than Jackson did. Partly because he found himself in control of the central government, and partly perhaps because he personally detested Calhoun with all the resentfulness of a narrow and overheated temper, Jackson asserted

Federal authority with summary vigor. It is a curious chance that one of the most popular sayings concerning Union which have lingered in our national memory, came at this moment from the determined president. This is his famous toast: "The Federal Union — it must and shall be preserved!"

To the preservation of the Federal Union, and to the maintenance of Union as an ideal, Webster consecrated his whole life. During his last twenty years the difficulty of his task increased incessantly. Clearly, if the ideal of Union were to prevail it must prevail throughout the nation. Such prevalence was fatally prevented by the fact that, as we have seen, the economic systems of the North and the South were incompatible. It is always difficult to touch on the question of slavery, without exciting moral resentment. Yet we can-

not fairly grasp the situation without, for the moment, neglecting its moral aspect. It is an economic fact that laws favorable to slave labor can hardly be equally favorable to labor which is technically free. Legislation which fosters the one system must generally injure the other. As the economic systems of the North and of the South diverged, accordingly, the divergence became more and more threatening to Union as a national ideal. In one aspect, to be sure, as has lately been pointed out by Mr. John C. Reed, of Georgia, in his illuminating book, "The Brothers' War." Union sentiment was strengthening everywhere. The conflict of interest between the free labor of the North and the slave labor of the South was beginning to modify the old Southern convictions concerning State sovereignty and to substitute for them the sentiment which

finally resulted in civil war between a united North and a united South. But Southern tradition still cherished the elder conception of State sovereignty, to which the national ideal of Union, constantly strengthening in the North, grew more and more fervently opposed.

Meanwhile there had occurred in New England a religious and philosophical revolution. During the first half of the nineteenth century the region of Boston broke from the bonds of its ancestral Calvinistic doctrine, and luxuriated for a while in that untrammelled outburst of devout free thought whose lasting exponent is Emerson. At first this devout free thought confined itself to religious matters. For a while after that it disported itself in regions of ideal philosophy. But by and by, as its flights lengthened, it began to devote itself to social matters. Its most ardent convic-

tions were based on the abstract right of every individual to innocent liberty. Slavery, it felt more and more, was a hideous denial of this right. The South, which defended slavery, consequently came to seem, in radical Northern minds abominably perverse. And in due time extreme abolitionists came to feel that if the Union, as defined by the Constitution of the United States, compelled any legal recognition of slavery, the Constitution was no better than a compact with Hell. The devotion of these enthusiasts to the ideal of personal Liberty, in short, not only blinded them to the elder ideal of local Liberty; it quite overshadowed their devotion to the newer ideal of Union. They came to believe that if by argument or by force they could not impress their own opinions upon their Southern fellow-citizens, they had best withdraw them-

selves righteously from all communion with such sinners.

This phase of Northern feeling was evidently as threatening to the ideal of Union as any assertion of abstract State rights could be. Sacred or not, our Federal Union was a political partnership; and sacred or not, a partnership involves on the part of those who enter into it certain rights and duties quite distinct from their private opinions concerning the morals of their partners. One may easily imagine, for example, a partnership in which one of the members is an ardent prohibitionist, and another derives a comfortable income from the rent of a hotel which keeps an open bar. Much as the prohibitionist may deplore this vagary on the part of his associate, he could never pretend, so long as the partnership exists, to deprive the associate of his profits on the ground

that he is given to the misuse of money in his free possession; nor yet could he at once maintain his partnership and smash his partner's bottles, whenever he could lay hand on them. Something like such disregard for unwelcome property on the part of partners underlay a good deal of Northern sentiment concerning the treatment of fugitive slaves.

Throughout the South slaves were property. So long as the free States remained in political partnership with the slave States, they could not deny this fact. Nor could they expect their partners to agree that if such property escaped to jurisdictions where it could not be legally acquired, it could thereby invalidate the title of its owners. If the free States and the slave States were to remain united, fugitive slaves must be returned — however regretfully —

whence they came, like fugitives from justice. Otherwise anything like permanent union was clearly impossible. Now Webster was no advocate of slavery; but he was always an ardent advocate of Union. He recognized the duties which the maintenance of Union unhappily involved. There is no need to seek other motives for the speech in which he supported a Fugitive Slave Law on the Seventh of March, 1850.

Up to that time Webster's advocacy of Union had made him an idol throughout New England. The Seventh of March speech dethroned him. The resentment which it excited there has hardly yet subsided. The most passionate and memorable expression of it is a poem still included in almost every collection of American lyrics, the "Ichabod" of Whittier:

"So fallen! So lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!

"Let not the land once proud of him
Insult him now,
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,
Dishonored brow.

"But let its humbled sons, instead,
From sea to lake,
A long lament, as for the dead,
In sadness make.

"Of all we loved and honored, naught
Save power remains, —
A fallen angel's pride of thought,
Still strong in chains.

"All else is gone; from those great eyes
The soul has fled;
When faith is lost, when honor dies,
The man is dead!

"Then pay the reverence of old days
To his dead fame;
Walk backward, with averted gaze,
And hide the shame!"

No passage in our literature more fervently expresses the phase of Northern sentiment in which the pristine national ideal of local liberty became submerged in the newer ideal of personal liberty. Whittier was deeply sincere, and beautifully free from that malignity of temper which makes the invective eloquence of many anti-slavery leaders sound scurrilous. His denunciation of Webster in "Ichabod" has far more force than any mere vituperation could have. If you read it sympathetically — and to understand anything you must read it with sympathy — you will be carried far beyond the mood where for the moment you can calmly reason about Webster's course. You will forget, for a little while, that this is explicable by his life-long conviction that if we were to preserve the priceless treasure of our national Union, we must respect even

the regrettable rights of those whom the terms of that Union compelled us to treat as partners. You will forget, for a little while, that the ideal of Union ever existed. Whittier's fervor, indeed, pales the eloquent sentence which Webster wrote in that very year, when popular indignation had refused him the use of Faneuil Hall: "I shall defer my visit to Faneuil Hall, the cradle of liberty, until its doors shall fly open on golden hinges to lovers of Union as well as of Liberty."

But not many months later, Webster was dead. And the Civil War came. And throughout its four tragic years our national Union was at stake. Popular tradition in the North, which represents the Civil War only as a humanitarian crusade, has forgotten that the question which precipitated the conflict was not whether slaves should be

freed; it was whether the American nation should persist.

The war passed. The slaves were incidentally emancipated. The Union was finally assured. And Whittier lived on. In his later years he made a final collection of his poems. These he somewhat indefinitely classified, and under each head of his classification he placed in chronological order the works which he desired to preserve. In the whole collection there is but one departure from this principle, and that is in the case of "Ichabod." Next to "Ichabod," and before the poem which follows it in order of composition, he inserted another concerning Webster, written so late as 1880. "The Lost Occasion" he called it, and here are some of its lines: —

"Thou shouldst have lived to feel below
Thy feet Disunion's fierce upthrow, —
The late-sprung mine that underlaid
Thy sad concessions vainly made.

Thou shouldst have seen from Sumter's wall
The star-flag of the Union fall,
And armed Rebellion pressing on
The broken lines of Washington!
No stronger voice than thine had then
Called out the utmost might of men,
To make the Union's charter free
And strengthen law by liberty.
How had that stern arbitrament
To thy gray age youth's vigor lent,
Shaming ambition's paltry prize
Before thy disillusioned eyes;
Breaking the spell about thee wound
Like the green withes that Samson bound;
Redeeming, in one effort grand,
Thyself and thy imperilled land!

. . . . . .

Wise men and strong we did not lack;
But still, with memory turning back,
In the dark hours we thought of thee,
And thy lone grave beside the sea.

. . . . . .

But, where thy native mountains bare
Their foreheads to diviner air,
Fit emblem of enduring fame,
One lofty summit keeps thy name.
For thee the cosmic forces did
The rearing of that pyramid,

The prescient ages shaping with
Fire, flood, and frost thy monolith.
Sunrise and sunset lay thereon
With hands of light their benison,
The stars of midnight pause to set
Their jewels in its coronet.
And evermore that mountain mass
Seems climbing from the shadowy pass
To light, as if to manifest
Thy nobler self, thy life at best!"

You shall search literature far for lines more magnanimous than these. As our passionately confused years of civil contest passed into the happy perspective where they now begin to glow lastingly heroic, Whittier, generous even among those brave men who had devoted their lives to the cause of individual liberty, could bring himself to feel that the most profound result of that war was that it made the ideal of Union dominant throughout our aspiring nation. Without that war, the two sections of our country must have remained fatally

divergent. The United States, if a nation at all, must at best have been a nation in which one section or another was to have its way. The war united us. It finally secured the right of individual liberty for all American citizens. It finally defined our unit of local liberty as indissolubly national. Until it had come to its issue, even those who most fondly cherished the ideal of Union, might sadly have said, "The United States *are* a Confederacy." Now we may all gladly say "The United States *is* a Nation."

IV

DEMOCRACY

From the very beginning of our national existence, — from the days when independent America first consciously cherished our national ideal of Liberty, and throughout the years when our national ideal of Union was growing to its slow and vital maturity, — our third national ideal, that of Democracy, has been vigorous. But since the Civil War, it has become so much more insistent than it used to be that it sometimes seems to have taken on a form almost new. Almost everywhere throughout recent American utterances about public affairs, or social, you will find Liberty assumed, and Union, too; Democracy, on the

other hand, you will be apt to find asserted in terms like those in which the subjects of a sovereign feel bound, on public occasions, to make open professions of personal loyalty. Of course if you like, you may call this a matter of passing fashion ; but on sober thought, you can hardly help recognizing it to be something deeper. Our popular professions of loyalty to Democracy often sound impressively like the confession of a creed ; and, in truth, the American ideal of Democracy has developed various creed-like qualities. Creeds, for one thing, though not intended to be tyrannical, are apt to prove so when confronted with unsympathetic freedom of speech or even of thought. At best, they are not kindly disposed to searchings for truths which they do not happen to specify. Something like this now seems the case with Democracy as a national

ideal of our country. There are moments when the unquestionable truth which inspires it, like the truth which must be at the heart of any creed, seems a little obscured by our unquestioning devotion to reverend phrase. At such moments America sometimes seems to be passing into the misty region of superstition.

This superstitious deference to the mere name of Democracy, this almost timorous acceptation of domination by a venerated word, is perhaps most evident in certain commonplaces now current concerning private affairs. On general principles, for example, you would suppose that when a question of policy presents itself to people interested in our universities, — whether the question concern academic interests, or those perhaps more absorbing ones involved in the athletic contests now so congenial to

American taste, — the single thing to consider would be how either learning or sport could most prosper. Yet over and over again you will find other considerations uppermost. To take a trivial example, perhaps the more characteristic for its very triviality, it is not long since an inconspicuous man was chosen to high undergraduate office in one of our older colleges, for no other evident reason than that he honorably earned money, during spare hours, by waiting on table at a college restaurant. The choice was applauded as "democratic." This popular adjective is constantly used as a crushing argument, too. Quite lately the chairman of a college athletic committee, criticised for having shown "favoritism" towards football, baseball, and rowing, to the neglect of other equally respectable sports, answered in an open letter that his course was dic-

tated by the "democratic" principle that people in general take most interest in the sports which he favored. The use of the word "democratic" indeed has gone further still. You will find it frequently applied in America to any line of human conduct which happens to present itself as agreeable. When royal personages have travelled here, for instance, and have behaved, as they behave everywhere, with pleasant simplicity, our newspapers and the public have frequently been so complimentary as to describe them as democratic.

Any mention of Democracy which should not imply unquestioning devotion to it is apt, meanwhile, to excite blind indignation. People so prone to idealism as Americans cannot help imagining that their ideals are absolutely true; and absolute truth is universal. Not to aspire toward it would be sinful

in anybody, no matter whom or where. Wherefore we most honestly prate of Democracy in all the glory of its absolute universality; and if any of us chance to raise a question of this universality, we run the risk of trouble. The very question now before us — a simple attempt to find out what the word really means among our countrymen — is apt to seem disloyal; and consequently to excite hot-headed patriots to utterances concerning tar and feathers.

And yet, universal as we may profess and believe our American ideals to be, we have already seen that those of Liberty and of Union cannot be quite understood until we appreciate those phases of them which are distinctly national. Something similar and even more impressive proves true when we begin to inquire how, for all its extravagant phrase, the ideal of Democracy has actu-

ally presented itself to the native American mind. So far as one can define the term "democracy," it means here, as everywhere else, the rule of the people, — as distinguished from autocracy, the rule of an individual sovereign, or from aristocracy, the rule of a governing class. To this extent, no doubt, Europe and America would be in complete agreement. The connotation of the word in America, however, — the range of emotion which it kindles here, — is peculiar to ourselves. To Europe, the rule of the people means something gloriously Utopian. To America, this rule means something immemorially familiar. Among us, indeed, the national ideal of Democracy has a kind of emotional sanction unparalleled elsewhere.

This emotional sanction springs from the special conditions under which our national history began. From causes into

which we need not now enter, — for it were fruitless here to dispute how far our forefathers were devoted to this or that abstract political principle, — the original governments of the American colonies, from the time of their foundation in the early seventeenth century, assumed on the whole a democratic form. Though the constitutions of the different colonies differed from one another, the greater part of the public officers were everywhere chosen by some form of majority vote. What is more, although the conditions of suffrage differed with almost every colonial constitution, there was hardly any colony, or even any town or county where, as a matter of fact, the suffrage was not more widely extended than was generally the case, during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, with similar constituencies in Europe. In Europe, one may

generally say, the suffrage was everywhere a privilege. In America, to begin with, it was probably the same; but the course of our history soon began to make the suffrage a privilege so general that people came to regard it as a right. By the time of the American Revolution, accordingly, — by the time when our nation and its ideals reached the stage of conscious vitality, — something like a democratic system had become traditional throughout the colonies. For a full five generations, at least in the elder colonies, the fathers and their children had been in the habit of electing most of the officers who should control the affairs of government. During the years when native America had slowly developed this state of customary law, democratic utterance and indeed the use of the word "democracy" had been infrequent and even unpopular; but more

or less democratic practice had been the uninterrupted rule of our political development.

A curious fact results. When revolutionary America, full of the enthusiasm of the later eighteenth century, echoed back the French philosophical declarations of the rights of man, it used concerning Democracy, just as it used concerning Liberty, terms which still sounded radical and destructive. At the same time, the democratic generalizations of revolutionary America really proclaimed no unprecedented policy, hostile to the form of government under which the revolutionists had hitherto been living. Rather, in the case of Democracy as truly as in that of Liberty, the living strength of revolutionary America lay in its determination to maintain unchanged a system of customary law and of established gov-

ernment which had already proved immemorially favorable to American prosperity and American righteousness. There seems to be a popular impression nowadays that the constitutions of the American colonies were tyrannically autocratic. This was so far from the case that, by 1775, a marked departure from some essentially democratic form of government, anywhere throughout the thirteen colonies, would have been as destructively revolutionary as accession to a democratic form of government proved to the old régime of France, or as aspiration toward democracy seems to-day in Russia. Now nothing is more clear to any one who grows familiar with American temper than that, for all our vagaries of utterance, we do not like abrupt breaches of historical continuity. Radical, then, as the terms of our democratic assertion must always sound, radi-

cal as our revolutionary forefathers may have believed themselves in the heat of conflict, the fervor with which those idealistic yet orderly ancestors of ours insisted that we must maintain a democratic system of government was really, like so much else in their conduct, an evidence of their political conservatism.

How deep this conservative impulse among native Americans has been, — how deep, indeed, it remains, — must be evident to any one who fully understands the structure of American society, and who is frank enough to admit its nature. Throughout our history, to be sure, there has been less legal distinction between one sort of men and another than has existed almost anywhere else. The generalization, so popularly repeated since it was phrased for us in the Declaration of Independence, to the effect that all men are created equal,

undoubtedly records genuine American sentiment. But, on the other hand, there has never yet been a moment in American history when one or another social class has not enjoyed a degree of personal consideration not popularly accorded to others. In the early days of New England, for example, public opinion acknowledged the hegemony of the the clergy. A glance at any among the older catalogues of Harvard or of Yale will tell the story. Until a few years ago the names of all graduates of either college who became ministers were printed in italics, to distinguish them from their brethren of the laity. For more than a century after the foundation of Harvard, meanwhile, the names of Harvard graduates were entered in the lists of their classes, not in alphabetical order, but in the order of their established social precedence; and

for the first sixty years of Yale, the same practice prevailed there. In both cases, accordingly, if a student who ultimately became a minister chanced to be of inferior social origin according to the complicated rules of colonial precedence, his italicized name stood near the end of the list of his class. Look for that of his son, however, a generation later. Whether this son were minister or layman, you will find, his name will have risen well toward the head of the class list, in recognition of the fact that his father had occupied a pulpit. The old hierarchy of New England was poor in the goods of this world, to be sure, but it had, even on earth, what no money could buy, — an edifying degree of social consideration. What is more, it exerted an extraordinary degree of almost arbitrary social power. It was not hereditary ; any able man was welcome to join

it; and its privileges and its dignity were sanctioned by little more than consenting custom. But these privileges were so fixed, this dignity was so assured, that there is something nearer truth than fancy in the familiar passage where Dr. Holmes celebrates the Brahmin caste of New England.

Those same old catalogues of New England record other forms of recognized social precedence as well. Men who held high public office in the colonies had the happiness of seeing their names printed in capital letters, and of seeing the names of their children head the lists of classes in which social dignity had not yet succumbed to alphabetic precedence. Yet the system of government which surrounded these dignitaries was by no means undemocratic in principle; on the contrary, it was a system in which an almost unprecedented degree

of popular suffrage had long existed, and was on the whole strengthening. The simple fact is that among the most deeply rooted traditions of New England was the frank recognition of certain social classes as superior to others. So long as the higher rank was freely accessible to able men of whatever birth, and so long as it in no wise empowered those who attained to it to transmit their privileges to unworthy descendants, it never proved unfavorable to democratic institutions.

At least in New England the days of recognized social distinction came to an end before the Revolution. The last Yale class of which the list preserves the pristine social order took its degrees in the year 1768 ; Harvard modernized its lists only four years later. But legislation cannot kill tradition. And something like the tradition which had

animated the elder college catalogues has lingered in America to this day. In the course of years, to be sure, the preëminence of the clergy has somewhat declined; at this moment they enjoy no higher consideration than is accorded to members of the other learned professions. But that very term — "the learned professions" — must arouse, in any mind familiar with America, associations which will go far toward proving that something like the pristine hegemony of the Yankee clergy long persisted throughout the regions which their spirit once dominated. The minister of any Yankee village in the later days of his social domination had two pretty clearly recognized fellows. These were the lawyer, — the squire, as Yankee dialect used to call him, — and the doctor. Both were college men; both had enjoyed the highest opportunities for

education which the America of their time offered. In the process of enjoying these opportunities they had made friends with other men of their intellectual class from various parts of the country. After graduation, these college men dispersed themselves widely; but they never forgot their college training and their college friendships, which made them, like the elder clergy, a sort of brotherhood. They had no special or official power; their dignity was protected by no legal privilege; but it was recognized and respected by public opinion. It was a social fact as undeniable as the dignity of any landed gentry of Europe, secured though that gentry might seem in its position not only by the consent of popular esteem, but also by positive mandates of law. Though the days of village triumvirates are doubtless past, almost as finally as the

days when Yankee pulpits were tyrannical, the tradition which gave dignity to the learned professions seems vital still. In its modern form it is rather more highly generalized. But no one who really knows American temper today can doubt its reverence for a college education. There is something pathetic in the wide and genuine respect with which Americans who have never been members of a college regard the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

The truth is that, however fervently Americans may have believed that all men are created equal, they have never gone so far as to insist that all men must permanently remain so. Undoubtedly, from the Revolution to this day, floods of popular utterance have pretended that American principle does not sanction the existence of any social order. In these torrents of eloquence there has

been so much truth as is involved in the fact that Americans have always been jealously careful that social order should not develop into fixed privilege. But here the truth of them ends. There was never a more American aphorism than one which chances not to be of American origin, — the assertion, popularly attributed to Napoleon, that careers should be open to talent. Whatever a man's origin, any American would agree, he ought to have every possible chance for a career which should bring his powers and his usefulness to their fullest fruition. This word "career" would hardly be disowned by the most ardent democrat between the Atlantic and the Pacific. A good many fiery democrats, meanwhile, might not quite realize all that it implies. The very conception of a career involves some end or goal for that career to attain; and any end or goal which

should make an earthly career stimulating in prospect, can exist only where social order is reasonably recognized. American democratic sentiment has not been misled by its conventional utterances. Its unconventional utterances are more pregnant. The human race, somebody has said, is just like any other; it is no fun unless some one comes out ahead. We have never seriously attacked that social order which makes careers possible. We have only maintained that, so far as may be on earth, social order shall not needlessly obstruct the career of any talent.

From this sentiment two or three results have followed. To begin with, as we have seen, American conviction has constantly regarded any sort of privilege with jealous suspicion; for privilege — even though, as often proves the case, it may stimulate aspirants to better work

— can hardly help seeming like an obstacle in the course of any able man who does not happen to possess it. An extreme example of this conviction deeply impressed me, a few years ago.

There was in my part of the country a local politician who hated Civil Service Reform. To be sure, even his enemies admitted that he was honest: he did not fill his pockets with public moneys. For years, however, he had devoted himself to the task of placing and of maintaining in public office a great number of persons whose only qualification seemed to be unswerving devotion to the political party of which his considerable talent for organization had made him the local leader. Accordingly all reformers agreed in denouncing him as unscrupulous, and, as I was apt to read reform newspapers, I made no doubt that he was a very bad

man. A friend of his, with whom I chanced to talk about him, threw a different light on his character.

He was a boss, no doubt; but he was as far from self-seeking as the best reformer who ever tried to purify the civil service; any one who knew him in private life could not fail to recognize his honest devotion to a cherished political ideal. His ideal, of course, was radically different from that held by the newspapers which indignantly denounced him. In their view, the only proper way to govern an American community was to consider as candidate for any office, high or low, only men who were well equipped for the duties thereof. To the boss whom they execrated, on the other hand, a contrary principle, held with equal ardor, seemed the only one which patriotic citizens could conscientiously cherish. This was that the most precious

and inalienable right involved in American citizenship is the right, undoubtedly possessed by us all, to be elected or appointed to any office whatever. In describing this conviction, his friend used a striking, though perhaps barbarous, Latin term. The deepest conviction of the boss, he said, — a conviction in the support of which that earnest patriot was prepared to make any sacrifice, — was that every American citizen possesses the *jus officii*, that is, the right to hold office if he can attain it. And this right the boss believed so sacred as to hold the principles of civil-service reformers not only distasteful, but abominable. To admit for an instant their pretence that citizenship was not full qualification for any office whatever would be to deny the universality of our precious American *jus officii*.

To my unpractical mind, nurtured by

academic commonplace, this conception of political principle was rather startling. Would the boss hold as a matter of principle, I ventured to ask by way of *reductio ad absurdum*, that a laborer who had never had a bank-account might properly be put in charge of the finances of a large city? Beyond question, his friend answered; if any citizen could get himself regularly in charge of anything, the boss would earnestly maintain that he had a right, as indefeasible as any monarch's right of succession, to keep in charge of it as long as he could. Indeed, this right was the most sacred of all conferred by the fact of citizenship. No one desired that offices should be mismanaged, of course; but frequent mismanagement of office would be preferable to a bureaucratic system which should deny the *jus officii* to the humblest of citizens. The devices of civil-service

reformers, — examinations, promotion by merit, and the like, — this eccentric idealist accordingly detested, as nothing more nor less than privilege in disguise. His views, though sympathetically presented to me by his friend, did not command my approval. It was impossible to deny, however, that they were enlightening. And I rather think that, for all their extravagance, they indicate some honest American impulses too generally ignored by us of academic habit, who have been apt to accept as gospel the lucubrations of that eminent foreign journalist, the late Mr. Godkin.

Again, the public opinion of America has not only been jealous of all privilege. Perhaps more characteristically still, it has maintained its jealousy, so obvious throughout the Constitution, of any preponderant accumulation of power, no matter where. It is fond of assert-

ing that our government is a government of laws and not of men; and, assuming this principle as fundamental, it may often be distracted from inconvenient scrutiny of any public question by the solemn assertion — sincere or tricky — that the tendency of the matters involved is to place undue power in executive hands, or legislative, or judicial, or corporate, as the case may be. Here again the dreaded word often has more instant effect than any state of fact. Americans hold formulas very sacred; and our honest jealousy both of privilege and of power makes us abruptly sensitive whenever we are told that anybody is grabbing either. We are very suspicious of any pretence to superiority on the part of those who endeavor to lead us. And yet we eagerly admire our true leaders. For all our distrust of privilege and power, we are not at heart ungenerous.

No people is more humbly willing to recognize and to cherish its national heroes.

As time passes some of these heroes prove worthy and endure. Others vanish into the obscurity from which chance plucked them for a little while. Like any other country, America errs, has erred, and will err again and again, in estimating contemporaries. Throughout our history, however, we have never wavered in our willingness to acknowledge merit. When you stop to think, you will find this fact significant; for all our prating of equality, it means, Americans have never denied that you and I, ordinary human beings, are living in a world where for one reason or another some of our fellows must always be our betters. They are not instantly obvious. They are not always to be found among such people as in other

countries might claim hereditary privilege or power. But they exist; and it is generally possible for them to demonstrate their excellence, if we will judge them by the tests of daily life. Whoever can thus demonstrate excellence will nowhere find more hearty and unstinted recognition than in this America, where all men, though created equal, are content to admit that careers should always be open to those who deserve them.

This reverence of America for demonstrated excellence is so genuine, so deep, so widespread, that when a national worthy is once established in our popular esteem few Americans stop to think where he sprang from. We have always had our various social classes, — rich and poor, educated and uneducated, more or less characterized by rectitude of personal conduct. Among these classes there has been

a good deal of mutual suspicion, sometimes culminating in passionate mutual misunderstanding. Yet, for all these differences between class and class, Americans of the true tradition have always been at one in paying honor to fellow-citizens who have proved themselves worthy. It makes no difference to Americans of any class whether their heroes sprang from among themselves or from surroundings which they generally incline to distrust.

At the same time, any one who knows the America of the nineteenth century must recognize that throughout the country we have been apt to delight most in careers which have begun obscurely. One can easily see why. Such a career is sure to be varied and picturesque. Besides, our American jealousy of privilege involves a sympathy with hardship, which sometimes leads to para-

doxical results. The very circumstances which are conventionally assumed to be advantageous — learning, friends, money — often work the other way. Indeed this preference for the less fortunate in origin appears in private life as well. A poor young man, starting in any profession, is far more apt to find practice coming his way than is his richer fellow next door. Even in matters so far from public life as college athletics, I have known instances in which the man who was admitted to be the ablest candidate for the office of captain of a college team, has been defeated by a candidate whose decisive claim was that he was a man of less fashion than his abler competitor. And whoever was an American boy thirty or forty years ago must surely remember a popular series of juvenile books with titles which imply exactly the kind of sentiment now in mind. "The Printer

Boy," "The Bobbin Boy," and so on, they were named. You might well have guessed them to have been sympathetic studies of infancy in misfortune. Nothing of the kind. One and all were somewhat legendary, but ardently patriotic biographies of eminent Americans who had begun their careers in decent obscurity.

That conventional phrase brings us to one deeply human reason for this popular sentiment. In life, as in painting, chiaroscuro, a deep contrast of light and shade, attracts the eye. It excites the attention, particularly of the untutored; and particularly the untutored have a tendency to dwell on the shade rather than the light. I remember, for example, a pious address concerning a Revolutionary general in which something like half an hour was devoted to the circumstance that in youth he had

been apprenticed to a village blacksmith. You would have supposed that the entire company present was content to linger indefinitely in admiration of this industrious image. Indeed, they may perhaps have supposed themselves so, for most of them would have assured you that no American could claim more honor than is due to an honest day's work. Yet if you had soberly questioned these patriotic people, you would have found them in the end willing to admit less admiration for a man who had remained at the forge all his life, than for this one who, having begun his career as a blacksmith, ended it as a victorious soldier. The true secret of American delight in careers of humble origin lies not so much in the humility of their origin as in the picturesque contrast between their origin and their achievement.

As has often been the case before, we have been generalizing extremely. No concrete instance could better illustrate our generalizations than the career of that American who during the last forty years has grown most secure in his rank among our national heroes, — a rank second only to that of Washington. I mean, of course, Abraham Lincoln. As surely as Washington may be called the Father of our Country, Lincoln may be called the Saviour of our Union. His greatness, as well as the inestimable value of his services to the nation, become more and more evident with time. Already, indeed, his memory is enshrouding itself in something like sanctified tradition, — so sacred that you are often met with indignant protestation if you dwell long on certain facts, plain facts of his career. And yet, stripped of all legend, that

career is not only the most interesting, but the most reassuring in all our recent history.

Of the various social classes in America during the nineteenth century, none seems much less promising than the poor whites of the South and of the Southern frontier. Yet as you read the story of Lincoln's early years you are forced to admit that some such dubious environment was that from which he sprang, and amid which he began his career. At that time the dominant class throughout the country, and nowhere more conspicuously than in the regions surrounding his early experience, were the lawyers. Everywhere throughout America, accordingly, the bar attracted ambitious and able youths, particularly if they were disposed to concern themselves with public affairs. Like all lastingly great

men, Lincoln was normal; so he wanted to be a lawyer. He was born in a log cabin. He had little if any chance of formal education. Surrounded by illiterate people, he was virtually compelled to educate himself. As is so often the case in America, his difficulties at once proved stimulating and saved him from the dangers of distracted attention. From the beginning he showed himself to be one of those rare men who have the faculty of somehow or other accomplishing whatever they earnestly undertake. Long before he appeared in public life, accordingly, or at least long before his name was widely known, he had risen to a condition far above the humility of his origin. Yet he would not have been the Lincoln of history, he would not have been even quite the Lincoln of tradition, if he had not retained, to the very end of his heroic life, many un-

couth traces of the obscure condition from which he so admirably emerged.

To a great degree, the while, these traces of his origin were superficial. So far as any one was ever disposed to infer from them that he could not deal with social conditions and personal characters strange to his early years, they were completely misleading. Like many other men whom the course of world history has proved enduringly great, he possessed an imaginative power so strong and so sympathetic, that he never found himself confronted by any class of human beings whom he could not sympathetically understand. The quality I have in mind is nowhere more conspicuous than in his magnanimous sympathy with political opponents, even amid all the controversies of the Civil War. But in another sense the rude exterior of Lincoln, which venerating posterity has

sometimes tried to disguise, was deeply significant. It never suffered those who knew him, even in the full splendor of his almost imperial career, to forget that he had emerged from very different surroundings.

Born a peasant, he grew to be an almost absolute sovereign. Think what that means, and you can hardly fail to understand how inevitably a life so comprehensive must have passed in its rising course through every plane of American society. As a matter of fact this was almost literally true. At one time or another Lincoln had known on equal terms every imaginable kind of American, high and low. His rise from beginning to end was regular, steady, and normal. To use the tritest of figures, he climbed the ladder of fame with firm foot, step by step. A less sympathetic man than he might have been apt, as

he rose, to lose vivid memory of whence he came, or at least to find the circumstances of the moment distracting. The supreme greatness of Lincoln was that, as he persevered through circle after circle of his terrestrial Purgatory, he never forgot the road he had travelled, or whom he had met and passed on the way. With every phase of American life he had been on equal, friendly, familiar terms. His career is the most typical in all our history of what Americans mean when, without defining the words even to themselves, they use that much abused phrase "a man of the people."

In certain moods that phrase sounds demagogic. But the moment we realize how truly Lincoln's career represents what we mean by the words, we can begin to feel that a man of the people as Americans conceive him is about as

different from a demagogue as anything of flesh and blood can be. Demagogues only prate of ideals. Lincoln, a true American man of the people, cherished ideals, aspiring towards them. He was a practical politician, and a skilful, — with a robustness of method perhaps beyond the unhesitating reach of men who nurture their political ideals in the hot-houses of academic culture. Yet he was devoted as unswervingly as Webster himself to our national ideal of Union, which more than any one else of his time he preserved and consecrated. He was unswervingly devoted as well to that newer phase of our national ideal of Liberty, crescent in the North throughout his life, which more and more emphasized the liberty of the individual. Believing in these ideals with all his heart, he early perceived that the institution of slavery

was dangerously threatening to both. Slavery disunited our national interests; and it denied to millions of human beings the freedom which the Declaration of Independence proclaimed as an inalienable right of all men. Yet his utterances concerning slavery are very different from those of virulent Abolitionists. However honest and enthusiastic, those apostles of liberty ran to excesses of speech which often make you wonder whether they were more stirred by love for slaves or by hatred of slave-holders. With Lincoln the case was different. Of all the evils of slavery the greatest in his mind was the fact that its growth, its extension, and indeed, as he came at last to see, its very existence, imperilled our national Union.

This Union, with all its increasingly ideal sanction, was what he had most

deeply at heart. No Abolitionist deplored the social evil of slavery more earnestly than he; yet I believe that he is somewhere recorded to have said that if the Union could have been saved without freeing a single slave, he would have been content with the saving of the Union. He never forgot, in short, that slave-holders had rights as precious, in their way, as the rights of the slaves whom Northern Abolitionists seemed to think the only factor in the question. Popular Northern tradition — the cant of crude oratory and unintelligent school-teaching — has misrepresented his most memorable act as President. His Emancipation Proclamation, which marked the end of negro slavery, was in no wise the doctrinal assertion of the rights of men which Yankee children are taught to suppose it; in purpose and in specific terms alike, it was an official

declaration, published by the executive magistrate of a sovereign power at war with dangerous opponents, that unless those opponents laid down their arms, the chief source of their wealth should be confiscated, as a measure of warfare. Lincoln was no such radical as would ruthlessly sweep away vested rights, just because he happened to think them deplorable. If he had really done so, — always supposing that such a deed could have been brought within the range of his official power, — he would perhaps have been a great man. The complexion of his greatness, however, would not have been so fine as that which we can discern in the magnanimous greatness which he really embodied. It would have lacked the final grace of imaginative sympathy with those whom his fate compelled him to oppose even to the death.

During his career as President, circumstances more than once required him to assume and to exert a degree of personal power hardly paralleled by any other sovereign of the nineteenth century. And yet, all the while, he remained as far from arbitrary as if everything he did had been duly sanctioned by unanimous consent. He looked upon himself not as an irresponsible dictator, nor yet as the representative of a single section of the country or of a single political party; he felt, rather, that the sad necessities of his time had imposed on him the grave duty of embodying the nobler spirit and of carrying out the deeper purposes of our whole people. That phrase "the people" he often used. And two of the instances in which he used it have lingered living in popular memory. Of these characteristic

utterances perhaps the more familiar may seem trivial. It persists, indeed, chiefly because of its high place among those shrewd saws which will always remind us how Lincoln could sweeten the bitterness of life with unexpected infusions of humor. On some occasion when popular opinion looked dangerous, — when the team of the Union was plunging and rearing, — Lincoln is said to have cheered some alarmed companions by remarking that "You can fool some of the people all the time, and you can fool all the people some of the time; but you can't fool all the people all the time." In which humorous words there lies hardly hidden one of the most devout extant confessions of our national democratic creed.

His other utterance about the people which Americans will never forget is

widely different. There is no note of humor in it. There could have been none without some discord which should have impaired its harmony. At least in popular memory, the crucial moment of the Civil War still seems to have been that when the only serious invasion of the North by Southern arms was finally repulsed on the soil of Pennsylvania. A few months after that decisive Union victory, they held a solemn service on the battlefield of Gettysburg, where a permanent burial-place had been set aside for the Northern soldiers who had fallen there. President Lincoln came to the ceremony, for the purpose of delivering the chief speech of the day. It is generally believed that, amid his pressing duties he had made small preparation for this occasion. The little manuscript which contained his words is said to have been hastily and carelessly written,

almost if not quite on his way to the spot where he uttered them. Yet among all the occasional speeches in our history that Gettysburg address stands unique, not only for its gravely intense beauty and power, but also for the classic brevity which makes every syllable of it emotionally significant. It is so short that we may read every word of it here and now:

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting-place for those who here

gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do so. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this

nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Exactly what Lincoln meant by "the people" one might be at pains to say. At unthinking moments the words undoubtedly suggest only folks of the lesser sort or the humbler, — of the kind, in short, whom we have in mind when we talk of the masses as distinct from the classes. Lincoln may thus seem to imply that men in this world, whosoever and wheresoever they be, ought to strive toward the end of flat equality. And yet, on reflection, we can hardly believe that he intended to make any such blindly generous denial of all human experience. We must remember that when he spoke of "the people" he was not merely a public official or an

occasional orator; for the moment he was in a position of almost absolute sovereignty. He was the chief magistrate of a nation at war for its very life. And just as surely as the previous life of that nation had been possible only because all classes therein had accepted the necessity of public order, so the actual persistence of that nation through the awful stress of civil war was possible only if every citizen should stay content humbly to hold his merited place in a public order which must be sustained unless the Union were to become chaotically extinct.

What is more, if we allow the radical utterances so frequent in America to betray us into the fancy that Americans have ever insisted on an impossible degree of equality among mankind, we have failed to understand the ancestral spirit of our country. The very

phrase of the Declaration of Independence which Lincoln interweaves in his Gettysburg Address, asserts that men are created equal, not that men must remain so. And we have already reminded ourselves, enough and to spare, that the more characteristic spirit of America has never abandoned itself to excessive insistence on equality in daily practice. Every man, it has stoutly held, should have the best possible chance for such a career as his talents make him fit for. Beyond this, American feeling has never generally maintained anything more radical than that all men, insomuch as they are created equal, should be protected, so far as may be, in their equal right to register their consent to the firmly established form of government under which alone our society and our nationality can prosper.

These conceptions may really be dis-

covered in the word "people," as Lincoln used it. Whether he was conscious of the fact or not, his wonderfully comprehensive life had enabled him sympathetically to know the whole range of American society. He himself was a man of no one class, high or low; he was truly a man of the people. If he had remained in the humble station from which he originated, he would have been, not a man of the people, but only one of a worthy, but limited section thereof. If he had remained a practising lawyer, or a local politician, in the Middle West, he would have been, not a man of the people, but a man of a distinct kind in one section of our country. If throughout his public career he had been what he was in his final years, a virtual sovereign, he would have been, not in any true sense a man of the people, but only a magnificent embodiment of efficient

personal government. For our people of America are not the rich, nor yet the poor; they are not the learned, nor yet the ignorant; they are not the wise, nor yet the foolish; not the good, nor yet the erring. From the beginning to this day the true people of America has been composed of all alike, — rich and poor, learned and ignorant, and all the rest together, each in his place, none unworthily secure, however high his place, none undeservedly oppressed, however low. And what makes Lincoln our most magnificently comprehensive man of the people, in whose name he spoke so earnestly, is that among all the varied and changing classes of which that people has been and shall be composed, there was none which he could not meet on equal terms, as one of themselves.

Something like this must everywhere

mark the difference between a true man of the people and a demagogue. But by no means everywhere need a man of the people be all that Lincoln was. For he was peculiarly, inevitably American. He was not only a completely representative man of the entire people whose national existence his career preserved; he was a man of our American people as distinguished from any other in the whole course of history. And this he could not have been unless in his more earnest moods he had been stirred to the very depths of his grave and tender being by a kind of idealism which could not help regarding the passing facts of this troublous earthly existence as poignant symbols of some infinite, eternal truth beyond and above any transitory experience of humanity. In all his utterances there is none which Americans must feel in

spirit more fully and significantly native than the very short address which he delivered in March, 1865, when for the second time he was inaugurated as President.

As a war measure, we may remember, and by no means as a tyrannical imposition upon others of his personal convictions concerning abstract right, he had proclaimed, two years before, that all slaves in all States which remained under arms against the Union should thenceforth be free. The result of that proclamation had already been the complete extinction of slavery throughout the regions subject to the law of the United States. And when for a second time Lincoln took upon himself the responsibilities of the chief magistracy, it was to this fact that his mind recurred. The terms in which he spoke of it are deeply characteristic

not only of him but of all his America, which is ours as well. And what makes those words so deeply characteristic, — what made Lincoln so comprehensively American, as he uttered them, — is the almost mystic idealism which pervades them. The more familiar you grow with them, the more surely you group them in memory with those Hebrew prophecies which the consent of twenty centuries has held to be divinely inspired.

"Fellow-countrymen," he said, " . . . on the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it — all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without

war — seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

"One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it.

"Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it

has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered — that of neither has been answered fully.

"The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of

those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

Six weeks later the war was at an end, and Lincoln was dead, murdered by the hand of a mad or half-mad actor, who fancied himself the Brutus of local liberty. Truly, "the Almighty has His own purposes." Lincoln was spared the task of reconstructing the Union which he had saved. He died heroic in the moment of his heroic triumph with all his virtues dominant, with all his trivialities and failings momentarily forgotten. And that momentary for-

getfulness of all in him which was not admirable is deepening into the oblivion where all of him that is not best shall finally sink from sight. What was best in him lives and shall live, so long as our America shall persist to enshrine it. For beyond any other figure in our history that great and constant man of the people reveals himself as the true embodiment of our own American democracy.

From the very beginning, as no one can deny, the surface of this American democracy has often seemed worse than careless. When a people so emotional as Americans find themselves perforce addicted to material pursuits, they are sure to show themselves vagrant and impulsive, in a thousand perversities of thought, of speech, and of conduct. Americans have constantly done things which shall provoke, according to your

mood, either cynicism or despair. They will do so to the end of their time. Yet, all the while, this story of their lesser lives has never been the whole. More even than many of ourselves can yet quite realize, the American people have striven to keep their aspirations pure, and their heroes worthy. The heart of a democracy devoted to orderly idealism can never be vulgar. There is no vulgarity in our national heroes, nor yet in the sentiment which has chosen them. For this sentiment is one of humble and honest reverence for the superiority of a few human beings who have risen above the mass of mankind. As such superiors, we cherish the memories of Washington, of Lincoln, and of Grant. The true spirit of America is magnanimous, too. In their own critical days Lincoln and Grant seemed only sectional heroes; to-day they belong to

our reunited nation. And there are not lacking signs that, in times not so very far away, our reunited nation shall cherish equally such other heroic memories as those of Jackson and of Lee. At heart, in its nobler moments, American democracy is at one. It has never yet refused respect and reverence to those who have proved themselves worthy.

All this sounds vague again. I can hardly illustrate it better than by recounting a little experience of my own, not very long ago. While travelling in Europe, I was deeply impressed by the manner in which an American newspaper, regularly sent me, discussed public affairs. If a foreigner asked what kind of people Americans really are I found myself apt, instead of attempting to set forth psychologic abstractions, to call his attention to its pages, and to

tell him that he could there discover much of what is best in the temper of our country. In a mood like his, I wrote to one of the editors that his work seemed to me truly and deeply native.

The personal letter which he wrote me back contains a passage so characteristic that, quite without his leave, I shall venture to set it down here; for I know of nothing anywhere which better expresses our national temper. Here are his words: "Faith in democracy, — if I may be allowed to define that terribly abused word, — is a part of my religious faith. That is, I believe in the undeveloped capacity of every man to comprehend the divine laws under which he lives, the divine order of which he is or should be a part. To understand those laws and to give to them a joyful and loyal obedience is self-government and is the secret of liberty

both for the individual and for society. To promote this self-government, I think I may truly say, is the aim of my life. Because with all her faults there is more of this ideal in the national consciousness of America than in that of any other people, I rejoice in and believe in 'what is most truly and most deeply native.'"

That little passage, so simple, yet so admirably expressive of our real American spirit, was carelessly thrown off in a casual letter. Had it been expressed more deliberately, it might hardly have seemed quite so truly and deeply native as it is.

In view of this, there is one phrase in my friend's letter which may set us to pondering. In his first sentence he speaks of democracy as a "terribly abused word." So it is among us at this moment, in more senses than one. We

prate about democracy in more and more wildly general terms, forgetting what in more solemn moments it has truly signified to the American forefathers who have left their heritage in our care. We have long allowed the word to tyrannize over us even in our private lives, until it sometimes seems as if half our fellow-countrymen would be disposed to assert that we could not be American unless we conducted our family affairs with due respect to a majority vote, — ordering no dinner until some process of domestic suffrage had ascertained what three out of five children might prefer to eat that day. This unresisted tyranny of the word "democracy" is perhaps our most instantly palpable abuse of it.

Terrible, all the same, is hardly the word for an abuse so laughable as this. Another phase of this abuse may more

justly be described by the solemn adjective. Our pratings concerning democracy nowadays are apt to sound as if they totally neglected that divine order on which my friend so admirably insisted. One can see why our tongues and even our wits thus run away with us. Orderly though American idealism may have been at heart, the most deeply characteristic phase of our national temper is not that it has been thus orderly, but that it is so intensely ideal. This national idealism, we have seen, has sprung in no inconsiderable degree from the intense self-searching of our ancestral Calvinists, who spent their whole higher lives in striving to discern that solemn fact, the unalterable will of God. Now the will of God may perhaps be recognized; but once recognized it may never be scrutinized or questioned without sin. Once perceived it blazes

with all the inscrutable splendor of eternally absolute truth. And it blazed thus before ancestral America, as the archetype of all ideals. Wherefore it has dazzled us to this day. Lesser ideals, like this loftiest of all, are in their nature ideal; they are not material facts; and so, confusing the lesser with the greater, we have been apt to conceive all ideals as essentially beyond dispute — as absolutely and eternally true. We have confused the ideals of earth with the immortal ideal of divinity; we have unwittingly made for ourselves idols. Thus, truly, there is something terrible in the manner in which we permit the mere word "democracy" to tyrannize over us, bowing down to it as to a graven image, abusing ourselves, and terribly abusing, the while, the name of the national ideal which we now most ardently cherish.

Again, there is another reason why our modern pratings of democracy should give rise to what among ourselves must seem an increasingly terrible abuse of the word. Any one who contemplates the tendency of European history can hardly deny that the whole world which we have called civilized is beginning, for better or worse, to relax its grasp on its old systems of government. Content until revolutionary days with its historic structure, European civilization has been disposed for more than a hundred years to prefer as the constitution of the future a system of democracy based on the dogmatic assumption of the rights of man. However noble its formulas and its aspirations, this European democracy still remains to a great degree doctrinarian and untested. At this moment, for example, there is no more important fact in French poli-

tics than the separation of the Church and the State; and in the very last article on this subject which I chanced to read — an article by a man deeply sincere, but fervently devoted to the principles of the French Revolution — my eye has lighted on such passages as these: "The laity of France is making ready to write the book of which the declaration of the rights of man is only a chapter." . . . "The circumstances of the moment make our legislators think that this crisis is only a rupture with all churches; in truth it is the normal and necessary result of democracy which means the rule of the laity, that is of the people." . . . "And finally there are at this moment in France only two kinds of people, — those who have received from the past centuries a treasure which they jealously preserve without being willing that it

should be scrutinized either by themselves or by others; and those who, whatever treasure the centuries have left them, seek, march, surge toward the future."

The commonplaces of our American democracy harmonize with these wider generalizations of modern Europe. And surely the dreams of European democracy, doctrinarian and untested though they be, are full of generous aspirations. However noble these aspirations, nevertheless, there lurk within them deep and almost obvious dangers. One of these dangers is implied in those fervid sentences from the French at which we have just glanced. Democracy, this writer feels, as distinguished from hierarchy, means the rule of the laity as distinguished from the rule of the church. It means, in other words, not that each class shall share in the government; but

that one class shall dominate over another. The only difference between democracy and hierarchy proves to be that in democracy the dominating class shall be a larger and more comprehensive, a less carefully trained and cultivated, a less cohesive and on the whole a lower. Now the fact of class domination, whatever the class which dominates, must tend toward tyranny. And when you come to tyranny, the tyranny of democracy is probably the most intolerable which the human mind can imagine. However generous its intentions, they cannot exceed the initial benevolence of a thousand monarchs and oligarchies, who have flourished and fallen through the changing course of history. Nor is there any reason to expect that a dominant laity or proletariat shall be a whit less arbitrary than a dominant individual. The most danger-

ous and most destructive kind of tyranny you can conceive of, indeed, is that which should be based on the whims of a mob. Toward something like this the impulses of European democracy now seem tending.

There is another danger in the utterances of this generalized democracy, — less material no doubt, but perhaps for that very reason more terrible. The dangers of the spirit exceed beyond compare the dangers of the flesh. There is no assertion of European democracy now more incessant — more eloquent or more blatant, as you chance to find it — than that which maintains the absolute dogma of human equality. Liberty, equality, and fraternity are the watchwords of the French republic, and of European democracy throughout the elder continent. Nowadays equality is the watchword of the three

on which European democracy is most disposed to dwell. And to the European mind equality seems to mean something different from what it meant to the authors of the Declaration of Independence. It does not mean that all men are created equal; it means that everybody must remain equal from the cradle to the grave. This conception is doubtless generous; the moment you scrutinize it, however, you cannot fail to perceive that it denies the right of any man to strive for superiority, for excellence, for that which may distinguish him from the mass of his fellows. In the seeming generosity of this impulse, accordingly, there lurks damnable spiritual danger — a danger never better phrased than in those words of the Anglican Litany, "From envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, Good Lord, deliver us."

These dangers, so deeply inherent in the democracy of modern Europe, are dangerous in America too. They lurk venomous in the utterances of all demagogues, and demagogues you shall find throughout our history, so long as our democracy shall exist. There are moments, happily enough, when we of America can deride them as comic ; but in the heat and danger of any critical political contest, our humor tends to fade ; and those of us who begin to feel grave find these demagogues and their utterances discouraging things and despairing. Now and again they seem like the evil prophets of some socialistic anarchy to come. And yet, all the while, whoever knows the course of our history may there find comfort. From the beginning to this day the tempests of our demagogic folly have so far proved only passing. The names of the dema-

gogues have loomed large; but again and again they have vanished into nothingness. Each in turn is swiftly forgotten. There is not yet one of them among our heroes. You shall search history in vain for a less demagogic worthy than Lincoln, the most comprehensively typical man of our American people.

Yet Lincoln, you may say, was only a man; and he has been dead and gone these forty years. For all the priceless-ness of his memory, we are now exposed, almost as if he had not been, to the dangers of democratic tyranny, — of a class tyranny, the more ruthless for the very reason that the class which threatens to tyrannize over us shows itself constantly lower and lower. In these fears there may be truth. One thing surely is true; there is nothing more essentially sacred in the power of

a sovereign people than there is in the power of a sovereign individual. Any sovereignty, if it is to endure, must be just, wise, generous, moderate, self-restrained. If Democracy, which is everywhere assuming the control of the modern world, is to endure, it must govern wisely, moderately, with generous self-restraint. Whether any consciously sovereign people can thus conduct itself is the deepest question which now confronts the modern world.

And here it behooves us of America to see ourselves as we are bound to be seen in the history of the centuries to come. At this moment we are the only living people to whom democracy has been confided, not as a philosophical abstraction, but as an ancestral practice. Democracy, as we conceive it, is so deeply rooted in our tradition that to those who have been nurtured in the

full spirit of our native America, any departure from a democratic system of government would be the most fundamental of revolutions. This is what to-day makes our country so solemn a fact. It is not because of our wonderful material powers and resources that we are now significant; it is because with us, and with us alone, democracy can show what it can achieve, when free from the savage dangers of destructive revolution.

To our history, past and to come, the world must accordingly turn with the greatest concern, in the times which are at hand. For on the course which our history takes, more than upon that of any other, must depend the course which must be inevitably taken by the history of the coming world. Whither this democratic era is truly tending, neither you nor I can ever live finally to know;

but of one thing we may feel confident. When the years to come are past, and when those who contemplate the century now beginning can see it in final completeness, the course of the single traditional democracy now existing — of our own America — shall prove most tremendously whether at this moment of crescent democratic force our world is passing into the dusk of a new barbarism, or into the dawn of a new dispensation.

THE END

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